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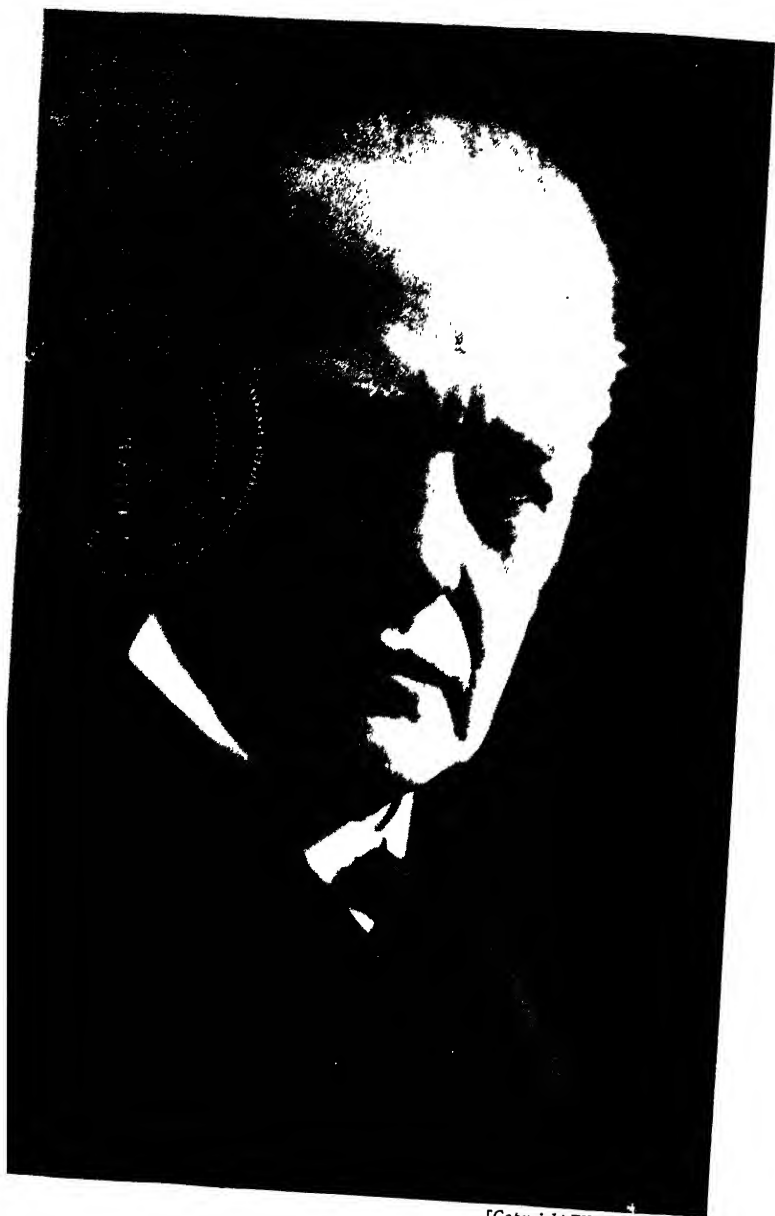
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LIFE: A STUDY OF SELF









W. B. MAXWELL—PRESENT DAY

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# TIME · GATHERED

*Autobiography*

*By*

W. B. MAXWELL

*“ Time gathered seems so small ”*

*With 8 Illustrations*

HUTCHINSON & CO.

*(Publishers) Ltd*



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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. DREAMS AND MEMORIES . . . . .	9
II. CHILDHOOD . . . . .	18
III. LODGINGS . . . . .	28
IV. ARS LONGA . . . . .	50
V. FAIRIES . . . . .	62
VI. BYGONE RICHMOND . . . . .	76
VII. A PLEASANT WORLD . . . . .	89
VIII. OLD LADIES . . . . .	109
IX. MISTLETOE BOUGH . . . . .	119
X. A HAPPY HUNTING GROUND . . . . .	126
XI. MY WORK . . . . .	144
XII. SOME SUNNY MEMORIES . . . . .	157
XIII. HOME LIFE . . . . .	181
XIV. NO WRITING ON THE WALL . . . . .	195
XV. THE WASTED YEARS . . . . .	214
XVI. KENSINGTON GORE . . . . .	254
XVII. MY MOTHER . . . . .	268
XVIII. WORK AND PLAY . . . . .	286
XIX. HOLIDAYS . . . . .	307
XX. BRIGHTON . . . . .	316
XXI. AUTHORS AND AUTHORSHIP . . . . .	323
XXII. MEDITATIONS . . . . .	335







# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

W. B. MAXWELL—PRESENT DAY . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
W. B. MAXWELL, AGED SIXTEEN . . . .	32
MRS. W. B. MAXWELL . . . . .	80
W. B. MAXWELL, AGED FORTY-THREE . . . .	128
"MISS BRADDON" . . . . .	176
BARBARA . . . . .	224
W. B. MAXWELL, AGED FIFTY-TWO . . . .	272
IN THE ROW BEFORE BREAKFAST . . . . .	320



**DEDICATION**

**TO THE ONLY BEGETTER OF THESE  
ENSUING PAGES, MR. HENRY MAXWELL**



# TIME GATHERED

## I

### DREAMS AND MEMORIES

TO how early an age does memory at its longest go back? The question is often discussed. Probably the length of time varies greatly in different people, and one must consider that things seem retrospectively to have been actually seen when they are only things that one has heard of. A young child is told much by nurses and others about its babyhood, and nothing is easier than afterwards to confound these legendary tales with actual experience. Again, there may be a confusion of dreams and realities.

My earliest clear recollection is of something that occurred before I reached my second birthday. I was standing at my grandmother's knee and being fed with fruit from a green dessert plate. When the little feast was finished I took the plate and threw it down or dropped it. It broke into many fragments and I wept. But was that merely something that might have happened, a legend of the nursery, and not an incident that unaided I could remember? I am not able to vouch for it.

The next memory is of a period soon after the age of two and I know that it is authentic. I was on the floor of a room at Brighton, whither I had come after an illness, and at nightfall my father had brought me from London a costly clockwork locomotive. In those days such a gift was far more rare and precious than it would be to a child of to-day. I sprawled beside it enraptured.



Then came something that I found very difficult to accept as a dream.

I was in my cot, surrounded by parents, relatives, members of the household, who were all trying to pacify me. They had rushed to the nursery because I had cried the house down. But, good gracious, not without reason ! For an enormous cat, at least six times larger than life, fierce and deadly of purpose as any tiger, had come and licked a hand that I was inadvertently allowing to hang out of my cot. Only a dream ! The elders assured me, at least persuaded me, that I had dreamt the whole thing—not only the cat, but my cries, the assembly. Nothing of it had happened.

Gradually, as they do for all children, the barriers between reality and the world of dreams became more firmly established. The outward scene, vague for so long, was now painted in stronger colours and with a wider brush. Our place of residence, dear old Lichfield House, came forward from a background of chaos and formed a solid unchanging environment.

Lichfield House, built at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was large, nobly planned, really a beautiful example of the domestic architecture of the period. It had panelled walls, carved doorways, fine chimneypieces, and a lofty drawing-room with five high windows and a bay that all the world admired. For many decades the house had belonged to the Bishops of Lichfield. Hence the name.

From a terrace immediately behind the house one looked downward over a slope of lawn to “a broad walk” of considerable length, with an equally broad strip of grass and a deep herbaceous border on each side of it. This made a pleasant vista, closed in by an orangery. There was a range of stables, with capacious lofts over them, a wide stable yard with the coachman’s cottage at the top of it and all sorts of outhouses at the bottom. Further, among external amenities of the house, there were extensive grounds and even a paddock in which one might see a cow or horses running loose ; the drooping branches of a widespread Spanish che strut



formed a shady tent ; a huge cedar was almost absurdly easy to climb ; a gravel pit gaped invitingly. Altogether the place made an ideal home for young children. Sometimes we essayed marauding in the kitchen gardens, where fruit ripened on the sun-baked walls beneath a suburban sky as yet unpolluted by London smoke. One found peaches and nectarines nestling among narrow green leaves. There were also some enormous yellow pears. Green figs, too, mellowing to crimson and purple, and ready to burst for ripeness.

When Drew, the under-gardener, saw us greedily at work he only grinned tolerantly, never interfering. But his superior, Lacy, would have none of it. Lacy, as I remember, was black-haired, tall, and skinny, always in dark clothes, a rather sinister and awe-inspiring figure. He chased marauders away. "Why can't you leave 'em alone?" Lacy shouted. "Don't you know they for the dish?"

I purposely mentioned that the house itself was large, and it needed to be, for it sheltered many inhabitants. The offspring of my father's first marriage, five in all, three boys and two girls, were there, but now almost grown up and presently to disappear one after another for wedlock or independence. There were five of us too, the second brood, with the same division of the sexes, two girls, three boys. Beyond the family in permanent residence was Miss Brown, an elderly lady who had known my mother as a little girl and been kind to her. She was now being repaid by an inexhaustible hospitality. Still further we frequently had staying visitors, and occasionally three or four at a time.

When all gathered together we formed a party in itself, and on Sunday especially with the midday meal, our dinner and other people's luncheon, to which we were admitted, with such games as hide-and-seek in the garden, card games after tea, and perhaps blind man's buff to wind up before bedtime, we were very gay and contented. My stepbrothers and stepsisters were good to us small ones, submitting to our company, entertaining us, filling the cheerful hours for us.



Then I began to recognize that the true source of happiness in the house was its gentle unselfish mistress. The power that her noble spirit exercised could banish querulousness, anger, and all evil humours. From an early age I adored my mother.

But I was also very fond of our old nurse. Harriet Campbell was quite a character, old-fashioned in her ways even at that remote date, the sort of elderly nurse with knowledge and experience that had almost been driven from a long secure position in the esteem of employers by the advent of a more attractive and better educated generation of young women. Small but wiry and vigorous, very active in spite of her sixty years, Nurse Campbell could no more than just read. Her only book was *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and sometimes of an evening she would labour at this portentous work with the aid of a key. As an allegory it seemed to me then (and it does now) a most boring affair. Her only game of cards was Cribbage.

Towards us she was careful, protective, and generous beyond belief, indeed spending most of her wages on lavish gifts to us. I am sure she would cheerfully have died for us. At any moment she was ready to do battle on our account—with the head gardener, the cook, or the chief housemaid. I remember a tremendous encounter with a boatman at Broadstairs and his complete defeat when she uttered these devastating words, "I'm a woman of Kent and I'm ashamed of you." Afterwards she explained to us the full significance of the denunciation. She had truly been born in Kent, and the native county meant much to her. On our journeys to Broadstairs when the train ran out upon the wide flats beyond Sittingbourne and the marvellous Kentish air came into our carriage, Nurse Campbell's old eyes began to shine, colour mantled her wrinkled cheeks, she drew long triumphant breaths.

At home in Richmond we used to be out and about all day, weather permitting. The nursery party comprised my young sister Rosie, my young brother Edward, and



myself ; for already the two elders of our brood, my brother Gerald and my sister Fanny, had floated themselves free of nurse control. We had usually Sarah our nursemaid as second-in-command to Harriet Campbell, and for transport purposes a perambulator always accompanied us. If our nurse was old-fashioned, I really think our perambulator was more so. On three wheels like the first tricycles, cumbrous and heavy as a wheelbarrow, with a vast leather apron such as one finds in bathchairs, it was the support of little Ted. But it gave Rosie, whenever she tired, a useful lift. If we were off on a real trek Nurse Campbell packed all three of us into it. In this manner she and Sarah pushed us right across Richmond Park and up to Wimbledon Common, truly a prodigious distance, to see a review of troops.

She had a passion for soldiers, and naturally imparted the same enthusiasm to us. This taste for red coats and drums led eventually to a painful little incident. One year, for reasons that I never understood, my parents let Lichfield House and took a house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. We liked Chelsea, as new and strange, and soon discovered the battalion of Guards at the barracks. Taking us there every day Nurse Campbell scraped acquaintance with the kindly guardsmen, who presently allowed us to penetrate through the archway to the barracks square. The good fellows let us taste their dinners ; they played with us ; they made us free of the place. It became our diurnal haunt. Then one never-to-be-forgotten day the whole battalion was on parade, in full dress, for our admiration. I picked up my coloured india-rubber ball and stood gazing, spell-bound. But then a soldier at an upper window somehow obtained my attention, and when I turned he made signs inviting me to throw my ball up to him for him to catch. I attempted this and failed. The ball struck the wall below the window, bounced back above our heads, and ran fast over the gravel until it stopped at last beneath the nose of the Colonel's horse. The mettlesome creature with a ridiculous snort of terror or affected terror swung round and pranced. The Colonel,



I believe, was very angry while he still thought that our little family group belonged to some non-commissioned officer, but when he found that we were merely intruders, disowned by everybody, he became excessively annoyed. He had us taken out under the archway with every circumstance of disgrace and obloquy, and we were warned never to return.

I never did until forty-five years later, when at the end of the War we of the Royal Fusiliers had a sort of triumphal march through London. Our point of assembly for this was Chelsea Barracks. Proud moments! The Household Cavalry mounted us. But as I rode out under the arch on my black charger, among all those veterans of war, the old childish feeling of humiliation possessed me, so that I hung my head and looked foolish instead of puffing out my chest and staring grandly.

Time was passing without one's marking its passage. We took no pram now on our outings. As a rule we tramped up the hill into Richmond Park, but occasionally we would go across the Green to the river and the tow-path. Going in that direction, we went by a small public house or tavern, from which issued with a tentative greeting the proprietor—a tall old man of forbidding aspect, by the name of Kemp. To our surprise Nurse Campbell encouraged the civilities of Mr. Kemp, and would linger talking to him. Then, one morning, an underling brought out a jug of beer and two glasses. Offered refreshment by Mr. Kemp, Nurse Campbell refused at first, but then, after a lot of pressing, accepted it. This was painful. My brother Ted and I, eyeing Mr. Kemp the while with increasing distaste, felt that she had suffered a great loss of dignity. But my pretty little sister stood there, fair-haired and blue-eyed, appearing to be absorbed in thought and noticing nothing of the external scene. Yet, in fact, she closely observed all that happened.

Rosie had learnt to write with great facility. She appeared to possess a natural literary gift, for she would sit in a corner of the nursery by herself, and scribble



diligently, making queer little morsels of story, essay, or drama. Soon then we found among her papers the following fragment of dialogue in dramatic form.

“ ‘ Good morning, nurse. How are you ? ’

“ ‘ Very well, thank you, Mr. Kemp. And yourself ? ’

“ ‘ Fair to middling. Have a nice glass of bear. ’

“ ‘ No. Oh, no. Certainly not. I couldn’t. Not to be thought of. ’

“ ‘ But she drinks the bear all the same. ’ ”

More time passed. Only a little of it, I think. And then a heavy blow fell. Nurse Campbell was leaving us. It was the end of the world to me. I implored my mother to avert the disaster. But my dear mother said she could not do this, and that it was perhaps a blessing in disguise. A sad tearful afternoon came, and Nurse Campbell and her boxes left.

We did not at first know where she had gone. There was a renewal of distress when I heard that she was at Mr. Kemp’s tavern.

Her enemy the cook said, rather preposterously, considering the age of the two parties, that she had gone as his concubine. The coachman, however, said : “ No. She was to be his lawful wife. ” And I have little doubt that this was the arrangement which the poor soul anticipated. But Mr. Kemp did not marry her. She became the drudge of the house, and I shall never forget the pain that I experienced one day at seeing her come out of the side door with a broom and bucket, and go in again through the door at the back. She recognised me, but without the slightest sign of pleasure. She seemed dull, spiritless, altogether crushed.

We had in her place an entirely different sort of person—rather the amateur than the professional type of nurse. Mrs. Addington was perhaps forty, but well-preserved, and by no means ill-looking. Her strong cards were gentility and propriety. She insisted that we should talk like little ladies and gentlemen—a similarity which hitherto, it seemed, we had never been near attaining. Our table manners also came under review,



and we learned to break our bread, instead of applying a whole slice to the mouth at dinner. Modesty at all times was enforced—but more especially in dressing and undressing. What used archaically to be called “exhibitions” must be rigorously avoided.

With Mrs. Addington we did our very first acting. She taught us about Dumb Crambo, and, I think, Charades, but am not sure. I know that she had one or two little printed plays, in which she allotted herself the heroine’s part and let us perform as the other characters. The plays were essentially genteel, and they had to be acted in a refined and well-bred manner. All this was amusing and enjoyable.

Then Mrs. Addington went to a dance and stayed out all night. In fact she did not come back until noon next day, and then with so lame an excuse for her absence that my father, who was disposed to be lenient, really could not accept it. They parted, but with no hard words on either side. Afterwards the cook said that she had been an actress, and was a notoriously bad character. That, of course, was cooklike rubbish.

Our good Sarah was promoted to the charge of us as “maid”. The word “nurse” disappeared from the vocabulary of Lichfield House, but “nursery” remained. We dwelt in the day nursery, and were divided at night.

Good and valued visitors used to come up to us in the nursery. Amongst them were Mr. Hackwood, a partner in Linklaters, the well-known firm of solicitors, and an old friend of my father; Joe Beaman, the son of Doctor Beaman, another old friend; John Latimer, a barrister son of the Mr. Latimer who owned a big West of England newspaper, *The Western Daily Mercury*; Fred Kean, a friend of my stepbrother Jack, who did delightful conjuring tricks. These people visited us because, I suppose, they belonged to the class of inveterate children-lovers. We certainly did nothing to entertain them.

Of all visitors the most welcome was our Aunt Rosalie, or Aunt O’Donnell, as we indifferently called her.

Mrs. O’Donnell was an elder sister of my father—Irish like him, and a widow of another Irishman, a tall and



massive lady, wearing old-world garments of rich material, gold chains and quaint locket, and on occasions with a ceremonious manner that was really overwhelming. Ordinarily she had a kind expression of face and easy happy ways. The smiles she shed on us carried an eloquent benevolence that I have never seen surpassed. She played a marvellous game of shop with us. It consisted in making herself a shopkeeper with a shop full of sweets. She unpacked the sweets and laid them out on imaginary counters, and they were the most exquisite delicious sweets in the world. Nothing approaching them in charm was ever met with locally. She brought them with her from London. We, of course were her customers in the game. We came to the shop, looked round, and asked for anything we fancied. And dear Aunt Rosalie with merry appropriate patter as a shopwoman made up little parcels and handed them over to us.

Once when she arrived on a visit my brother Ted was ill with measles. It was a slight attack, and he continued to keep "well in himself", as the saying was. But he had to lie in bed and be isolated. Aunt Rosie knew of the illness, but nevertheless paid her visit to Lichfield House, only premising that she must be kept out of contact with the invalid. She said that this would be a deprivation to her, because, as we knew, she was tenderly fond of my brother. But one must have common sense. And another reason why she could not run any risks was that she had to think of her own son and daughter at home. On arrival she confirmed her attitude in the matter, adding that she was sure my mother would understand. But then, perhaps an hour later, when my mother went up to the sick-room, she found Aunt O'Donnell established there, calmly seated at the bedside, smiling and cracking her pleasant little jokes. Moreover she had opened shop—a special small shop upon the bed itself. She had not been able to keep away from her little favourite.



## II

### CHILDHOOD

**E**NIGMATIC things are said to little children very annoyingly. Children hate this. But grown-ups seem to take a silly pleasure in befogging and befooling them. When the children, in distress, ask for a plain explanation of what has been meant, a grown-up will add to the offence by saying something even more idiotic—as, for instance, “You must eat more pudding, and then perhaps you’ll understand.”

Eliza, the chief housemaid, used to say when I boasted, “Oh, yes, there was only one like you, and he was drowned coming over.” I racked my brains over the significance of this often repeated speech, never fathoming the mystery, but knowing vaguely that something insulting was intended.

Again, many people will say roguishly to an anxious child, “Oh, you want a fine day for the picnic to-morrow. Very well, we must consult the clerk of the weather.” Of course one wants to know who is the clerk of the weather. It bothers one not knowing.

Another insult that I remember. “Now, you run down to the bottom of the garden and see if I am there.” A long run, and a fruitless errand. What sense is there in saying such things to a child?

Absolutely false information is given too. I was told, with every semblance of good faith, that if one wanted to catch a bird, it was only necessary to put a little salt on its tail. I was delighted to hear this. I did want to catch birds. I obtained therefore a bag of salt from the kitchen, and ran about the lawns, and along the shrubbery edges, seemingly doing this day after day for a long time, casting salt energetically, but always



missing the mark. Then, one day, I was pursuing a big blackbird in this manner. It hopped and fluttered here and there. Sometimes I got quite close to it. Then he was gone too far again. At last he gave me my chance, and I simply smothered his behind with salt. To my indignation and disgust he flapped his wings and flew away.

Disillusionment of course is a dreadful thing, sickening to youth, and a bitter food to old age, even when it has become a customary fare.

With many pleasant visitors who came to the house, I discovered that one must not put too much faith in them. They would play one false. I suffered this discomfiture at the hands of Mr. Joseph Hatton. He was one of the most prominent dramatic critics of the period, and had written several successful novels, the most successful being, I think, entitled *A Modern Circe*. Anyhow, he was very well known, and well considered too in all literary circles. His wife was a charming, plump, middle-aged lady, looking younger than her years, and, being behind her time in that way, was ahead of it in another. For Mrs. Hatton profusely powdered her face, indeed made it as white as a clown's, and she would even add a touch of red paint to her lips. This often astonished onlookers, because make-up except on the stage was so very unusual. Hatton was also plump. Quite short of stature, he was yet robustly built, and his almost black hair grew in a profusion of wiry strength from his broad intelligent forehead. He was essentially an amiable person. Amiability—and more than that—a sort of universal affection—seemed to flow from him, so that he could not talk to people without linking arms, or patting and pawing them. Well then, on a Sunday afternoon, in the drawing-room of Lichfield House, he stood beside me, with his arm round me, fondling me, pressing me to his heart, while he talked about the art of drawing, for which, as I had told him, I had a bent. Then he asked for paper and pencil, and releasing me sufficiently to get to work, he drew all sorts of things on the paper in a queer



geometrical manner that was baffling, but supposed by him to be enlightening. He said the square was the foundation of drawing, and he made a lot of squares, and fitted a human form into it. "There," he said, "you get a figure that the squares have given in true proportion"—or something of that sort. Next he asked me about my drawing materials and general fit-out as an incipient artist, saying I ought to have a certain form of sketch-book with toned paper, a box of coloured crayons, and charcoal, a compass, drawing-pins, and much else. All these things he would give me. He promised that this handsome and comprehensive gift should be despatched to me quite early on Monday. I might hope to receive it by Tuesday morning at latest.

Tuesday morning came, but no sketch-book or coloured chalks—not so much as a drawing-pin! I hung about, impatiently waiting for the next post, and after that for day after day I watched the postman's arrivals. They were all barren. Nothing ever came from Mr. Hatton. Talking about it, I said I could not have believed that anybody could be so treacherous. He had seemed fully to mean what he said. My dear mother told me that probably he did fully mean it, but then he forgot. She said that very busy people really cannot remember everything. I must therefore make allowances for Mr. Hatton, and not blame him too heavily. Oh, but I *did* blame him! He had made me ready for others, but he himself could never be forgiven.

In the picture gallery of my memories there hangs another piece, happily contrasted to this gloomy one. A friend very often seen at Lichfield House was Lawrence Hamilton, a rich bachelor, Jewish, but non-conforming, and learned, scientific, familiar with all foreign literature. I knew this because of the foreign books that he used to bring for my mother. He lived in the Bayswater district (Gloucester Terrace, I think), in a nice comfortable house where for a time he had practised as a doctor. But I believe he was interfered with by the medical profession, not for any lack of skill, but because of something irregular or insufficient in his qualifications.



Perhaps it was some not completely recognised university that had given him his degree. He entertained us hospitably at his house on more than one occasion, and marked me out especially for the attentions that spring from a quickly aroused fondness. He called me "Wilkie", instead of "Willie", and the name seemed to have something of value in the regard that he immediately showed me. I might add that as evidence of the regard I had received one or two presents.

My sister and I discussed whether I ought in honesty to tell him that my name was not Wilkie, and Fanny thought it would be dangerous to disabuse him. Later on he might find out from the elders. In the meantime one could hope for a few more presents.

Then the marvellous thing happened. When at luncheon with him one day he said something about my watch, perhaps telling me to look at it. But I replied that I had no watch. "No watch?" said Doctor Hamilton. "Oh, but Wilkie, you are more than old enough to have a watch. I will send you one."

I did not expect it, or trouble to wait for the postman's arrivals on the chance. But the next day or the day after I was handed a small registered parcel, sealed with red wax. It was a tightly packed jeweller's box, and it contained a beautiful silver watch and chain. I put it on, drunk with pleasure.

On the following Sunday Lawrence Hamilton was with us at Richmond again, and I thanked him as eloquently as I could. Fanny helped me, with well worded praise of him and of the watch itself.

"But where is *your* watch, Fanny?" asked Doctor Hamilton.

Fanny did not possess a watch. Two days later a watch and chain exactly similar to mine arrived for her.

I talked to my mother about the good memory of Hamilton, as I had talked to her about the bad memory of Hatton. I talked to her about everything that concerned me largely. I think that I must already have understood that our love for each other was infinitely



the biggest thing in my life. It was always developing, always growing finer and yet stronger. We became real companions. She told me once that in her overwhelming grief on the death of her mother she turned to me—not for consolation, because nothing could console her—but for some slight solace—a respite from sad thought. I was proud to think that I had helped her, however slightly, and I vowed to myself that I would never fail her.

Next to her in my affection was my brother Gerald. Fond of me and indulgent to me, as he ever remained, he was a noble friend, an example of chivalry, courage, and other high feelings. Also, then, and always, he was very handsome, with a truly beautiful face. Sunshine came from it. With it he lit up everything for us. But he was much at school.

My mother's company and conversation as the years went by were necessarily a stimulation to any intelligence I possessed, and I think it made me precocious in one or two ways. One of them was the very strong interest that I took in all sorts of people. Their resemblances and differences engrossed my attention. Of course I did not consider them philosophically, I merely observed and mentally recorded. They did not have to be of any great importance—they were men and women, that was enough for me. But so many of our visitors were intrinsically of particular interest, since they were individuals, and not merely types. I noted them all. And, without attempting a long list, I would cite the names of Wilkie Collins; two lady novelists, Mrs. Cashel Hoey and Mrs. Lynn Linton; George Augustus Sala; handsome Mrs. John Wood, the actress; Buxton, the actor; Sothorn, the creator of Lord Dundreary; T. H. S. Escott, the editor of the *Saturday Review*; Colonel Addison, father of Judge Addison, and grandfather of Sir Joseph Addison, our late Minister at Tokio. The Colonel was a handsome, warm-hearted, peppery old fellow, a close friend of the Duke of Cambridge, and generally liked in social circles. He wrote, but only in a fine-gentleman amateur style. Also from the very



beginning of things we had in and out of the house at almost all times Major Byng Hall. Major Byng Hall was a Queen's Messenger, and on his journeys and in his leisure, he collected china, a considerable amount of which he sold to my father. He had written a book called *The Adventures of a Bric-à-Brac Hunter*, and Mark Twain in *The Tramp Abroad*, or *The Innocents Abroad* mocked at him and his book, calling him, I fear, "The preposterous Byng".

I said that this friend came at all hours, but the descent he most favoured was the dinner hour. He would appear just when the meal had been announced, and, refusing to join us at it, would sit in a corner of the room and talk. Presently this was a little irksome—the man in the corner, refusing to eat, and watching our mouthfuls. We made a family saying, and described it as "Bynging". "May I Byng you?" we asked of one another. Unless I am mistaken, my children talked of "Bynging" and being "Bynged" without in the least knowing the origin of the phrase.

Charles Reade at one time came to us a great deal, staying a night or two, and occasionally for as long as a week. To his death he continued to be a great and honoured friend of the house. My mother was very fond of him and he had the highest possible opinion of her.

"Miss Braddon was his intimate friend," writes Mr. Malcolm Elwin in a recent biography of Charles Reade. "To her he dedicated *The Wandering Heir*, as 'a slight mark of respect for her private virtues and public talents'—a rare honour from a novelist singularly sparing with dedications."

Mr. Elwin says too that in one of his alphabetically indexed notebooks he devoted four pages to her. This is from the quoted extract :

"As for M. E. Braddon, I don't know where to find a better woman. Industrious, self-denying, gentle, affectionate, talented, and utterly unassuming, a devoted daughter, faithful wife, loving mother, and



kindly stepmother. Her first stories were masterpieces of narrative . . . ”

He wore very loose clothes by day, and they were nearly always grey in colour. During evening hours when in neat well-made dress suits of the orthodox black he seemed quite startlingly to have shrunk to half his customary size. He had a fine face, usually pale, an undeviatingly courteous manner, and a tranquil urbane voice. He did not become loud even when excited. Yet the excitement was sometimes intense. Although outwardly so quiet and undisturbed; he had roaring volcanic fires within. He burned with generous angers and indignations. Injustice was for him the unforgivable sin. He made himself the champion of the downtrodden, the eager fighter of protracted battles, no matter at what odds, on behalf of the weak if he believed they were suffering oppression at the hands of the powerful. Once he made a tremendous outcry, when he thought that he himself was going to be “put upon” by governmental authorities. His house at Knightsbridge was menaced with compulsory purchase and demolition in some local improvement scheme. “Never,” said Charles Reade in a quiet but far-reaching voice, and he put up a great hoarding at the front of his house, calling public attention to it as “Naboth’s Vineyard” . . . “The Home of Charles Reade”, and so on. The scare passed, the house remained. Only now, so many years later, is it about to come down.

A plaque indicates its position, close to the hotel, one of the row of small residences backing upon Hyde Park. In the days of which I speak it offered many attractions to the young. A long narrow garden behind it ran to the very edge of the Park, and at the end had an erection that was summer-house below and platform or terrace above. Seated on this platform, we watched, round-eyed and admiring, as if in a large private box at a theatre, the pageant of Hyde Park in Fashion’s brightest hour.

We saw, passing before us, in slow dignified style, never hurrying, gentlemen on horseback, wearing silk



toppers, black frockcoats, dark-coloured trousers, which were strapped beneath Wellington boots of patent leather with box spurs in their heels. Fine ladies in carriages rolled by—the finest of them in barouches on cee-springs, leaning back, languidly guarding delicate faces with gay parasols. Here and there strolling on foot were equally fine young ladies, accompanied by a sedate lady's maid. No young lady of course walked alone. Family parties, habitual quartettes, had landaus to carry them instead of barouches. Papa sat with mamma on the seat of honour, while two grown-up daughters with backs to the horses faced them. I do not think that nowadays you would find paterfamilias so comfortably established. One of the daughters would rout him out ; and he himself would consent, feeling that he must in decency give way to a female, even though his own progeny. There were very few of the carriages called victorias. There seemed to be a prejudice against them as not being quite the thing—even unpleasantly suggestive of fastness. Perhaps this was merely because the upper classes of Parisian *cocottes* had adopted them, and used to spin provocatively and at a great pace up and down the Bois de Boulogne.

In the house, where Mr. Reade gave us a munificent high tea, we could always find things worthy of attention—delightful unexpected things sometimes, as for instance notably a small antelope or gazelle. I cannot remember the gazelle ever going into the garden, but it wandered freely from floor to floor and room to room indoors. It was a gentle tender-eyed creature that made one sorry for it. Before very long it died. Like Byron's gazelle, it was sure to die.

Reade's altruistic energy and the spirit of crusading that impelled it naturally made themselves perceptible in his books. Several of them were "novels with a purpose". *Hard Cash* exposed the perils to the community of private madhouses. Another, *Foul Play*, dealt with the dastardly practice of over-insuring unseaworthy ships, and then sending them on voyages that disaster would end very profitably. "Coffin ships" they were called. Another, I think, concerned itself



with the tyranny of trade unionism. These books and others of his were all written in strong nervous prose ; they were picturesque as well as being forcible ; they carried one along with a swing. They are still to be seen on the shelves of public libraries, but I wonder if people now read them ? Very few, I fear. Yet they are certainly still worth reading. Another of his novels, written with only an artistic purpose, is the long historical romance *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Personally I delighted in this book, and all through my adolescence returned to it with rapture. Indeed I thought it the very finest novel that had ever been written. But I did not find anybody who shared this enthusiastic view until much later in life I met Conan Doyle, who said just what I used to say about it. But, alas, by then, my feeling for it had gone cold and dim, in fact had dropped into the limbo of renounced opinions.

No writer was ever more methodical than Reade. In those note-books spoken of by Mr. Elwin he had stored a mass of varied information for future use in his work. Whenever he wanted to know something or to verify something, he turned to this neatly arranged storehouse. Nearly always he found it there, and he thus escaped a labour that befalls ordinary people in being obliged to consult books of reference. A process that is slow and cumbrous for us was rapid and easy for him. Dealing so much with facts in his fiction, no doubt he collected these especially. He had a great respect for actualities.

He told my mother that she should never fail to study the day's newspapers.

My mother said that she felt this as a duty that ought conscientiously to be fulfilled, but her misfortune was that the papers robbed her of time that she wanted to devote to books.

"I know, I know," Reade said gently and sympathetically. "That is painfully true." But then after meditating he spoke with firmness. "But if you are forced to choose between the newspapers and reading the books, you must make it the newspapers that you read."



As well as his crusades he had welfare movements, social innovation plans, and even fads, about which he would be quite hot and eager while their novelty lasted.

One of these fads was ambidexterity. He said there was not the slightest reason why people should fail to make use of both hands and thus be almost twice as efficient as they were in their one-handed condition. Innocent little children, he said, were cruelly made to abandon the use of their left hand. "No, *right* hand, darling. . . . Give the gentleman your *right* hand, my pet, not the left. . . . Spoon in *right* hand, dear." Whereas if left to their own devices young children would become just as "handy" on one side as on the other. He begged us, for his sake, to attempt a restoration of skill in our left hands.

We were so fond of him that we tried hard, and honestly pursued the exercise. But it was most wearisome. Moreover, the success we met with was small. I did as a supreme effort write a letter to him with my left hand, and he was highly gratified. Then I worked less and less hard. My interest was fading. At last somebody said authoritatively that if you really taught children to use both hands equally well they would go mad. On that we stopped altogether.

Mr. Reade did not mind. In fact *his* interest had faded too. He was incubating a new fad.



### III

#### LODGINGS

ONE of the many changes in custom that I might have noted in its progress, but did not in fact observe until it had been completed, has been the almost total disappearance of lodgings. In my youth people away from home habitually lived in lodgings. These consisted of suitable rooms in a house where one ordered one's own food, in fact did one's own catering, going to market sometimes for the things, which were then prepared by the lodging-house cook. Nowadays such accommodation is scarcely to be found. The boarding-house and the private hotel have taken the place of the old-fashioned lodging-house ; and it is only in the more humble parts of provincial towns, or perhaps here and there in those narrow Mayfair streets that run northward from Piccadilly, that one sees over a door, or at the corner of a window, the significant word *Apartments*. But I believe that even in London the lodger is required to pay for his meals at a fixed rate—so much for breakfast and so much for luncheon—and may not provide the stuff himself. Of late, too, spreading widely and rapidly, especially in the South Kensington and Earl's Court district, are the bed-sitting-rooms, or "flatlets" as they are called, where service is given, and board offered, to be taken or left as one pleases.

When children we were often very happy in lodgings, and I think the highest pitch of excellence they ever reached was at Broadstairs, where we were taken, in charge of a governess or superior maid, to a very pleasant clean house on the high road near the railway station. Mrs. Franklin, the landlady, was like her house, pleasant, clean, homely. She cooked admirably, and on our first



evening gave us some simple but delicious cakes that were afterwards regularly demanded. In front of our window there were wide fields, stretching downward in the direction of the North Foreland, while immediately behind the house, on the Ramsgate side, there was a smaller field of brown stubble. Both views were agreeable to the eye in the early morning, with the sunshine brightening the colours of earth and grass, and making the dew-laden stubble sparkle gaily. The time was September.

"When are you going to see my husband?" asked Mrs. Franklin.

"When?" we asked. "And where?"

"Why, at the mill," she said.

"The mill!" we echoed, trembling with excitement.

"Not the windmill!"

"Of course," said Mrs. Franklin.

The windmill, I should explain, was the most conspicuous object in the whole place. It dominated the little town, it was a landmark for many miles. It towered above Mrs. Franklin's house, and we knew therefore it was not far away. But we had no conception of its nearness.

Immediately now we scurried across the stubble to the mill. Mr. Franklin, the miller, all white (and just as Tennyson described), stood in a mist of meal at his doorway, and welcomed us most kindly. He was as jolly to us and as nice as his wife. Up and down we went, from floor to floor, a little awestruck, and yet wholly delighted. The great majestic sails slowly passed a window as we mounted. The incredible thunder and clatter that they made shook the entire building, and yet one could hear too the lesser sounds of the grinding machines. That fine dust was everywhere. Nearly everywhere too the rich mature perfume of the grain and the fresh crisp odour of new flour mingled themselves.

Mr. Franklin let us come to the mill and play round and about in it whenever we cared to do so, and naturally this was very often. Of course that tremendous amenity



or appanage to the lodgings made them ideal and unique.

The next best lodgings that I remember were at Brighton. They were auspiciously placed, being on the "Front", and at a most interesting part of it, close to the Old Ship Hotel. Our rooms on the first floor ran over two prosperous shops—a fruiterer's and a sadler's. The King's Road offered an attractive spectacle all through the October days. And really, as though it had happened yesterday, I can feel the thrill that came to me when, looking eastwards, I saw emerging round the corner one or two soldiers on grey horses. I think I knew instinctively the large treat that we were in for. Horse soldiers, not mere infantry as at Chelsea! They came! A whole regiment of the Scots Greys, with red tunics and bearskins, with the band playing them along. A brave sight! There was always a cavalry regiment quartered at the Barracks on the Lewes Road.

The King's Road filled in the afternoon with an endless procession of carriages, two or even three abreast, going the long length of the Front, and then returning. Those who only know it as it is now would scarcely believe what a Brighton it was in those days. It was a regular fashionable resort during the months of October and November, and perhaps half December. As yet very few people were going to the Riviera, and none to Egypt. Those high places in the Alps, together with their winter sports, were quite unknown. Other places such as Madeira and Algiers were but sparsely visited. One saw everybody who was anybody at Brighton.

As well as all the visitors there was a population of residents who made a society for themselves. Great noblemen often had their Brighton houses as well as their London houses. Some very rich people were famed for their hospitality—notably several members of the Sassoon family. Towards the end of the reign, Mr. Sassoon of Hove more than once had King Edward staying under his roof. He or a relative continued to entertain largely until his death in comparatively recent times. Enormous Saturday evening dinner-parties were



much valued by his numberless guests. They are still spoken of with regret, as of something good in life that has passed away.

It may be remembered that Henry Labouchere (Labby) said, "Brighton is four miles long by half a mile broad, with a Sassoon at each end and one in the middle."

The afternoon train at Victoria for Brighton, especially on Saturday, was a meeting ground for well-known men and women—much as the Blue Train and the Golden Arrow became later.

Edmund Yates might frequently be seen ; quite often too Lord Londesborough, lover and patron of the London stage ; Labouchere ; T. P. O'Connor ; sometimes Burnand, the Editor of *Punch*, but rarely, for Ramsgate was his haunt ; the Duke of Fife ; Sir John Millais ; Lionel Brough, the comedian, if for a week or two out of an engagement, "resting". My father used to tell us of those whom he had met at Victoria, or in the train. (He never met anybody *on* the train. That awful expression was not yet known.)

Before one journey he was introduced to Miss Fortescue and her betrothed, Lord Garmoyle, the son of Lord Cairns. Miss Fortescue appeared, I think, both in *Patience* and *Iolanthe*—a true fairy, dazzlingly pretty, charming, and with a spotless, indeed an altogether unassailable reputation, cultivated too, and thus well fitted to make a countess in due course. All this no doubt was taken into consideration when, later, she found herself forced to bring her action for Breach of Promise. The action was quite a sensational case ; perhaps because the first of its kind. The big damages staggered the world. Ten thousand pounds ! Not that the sum seems so large to-day.

Miss Fortescue never married, and I am glad to say she is alive and well to-day. I have the pleasure of meeting her sometimes, and we talk of old times—especially of my brother Gerald, who acted in her company for a little while.

At the week-ends there would almost certainly be some



legal people bound for Brighton—Lord Coleridge (the Lord Chief Justice), Sir Henry Hawkins (the hanging judge), Sir Charles Russell (to be another Lord Chief Justice), Frank Lockwood, Charles Mathews, Montagu Williams (advocates of high repute). Sir George Lewis, the wonderful criminal solicitor and confidant of the aristocracy, from whom none of their secrets were hidden, should be named too. All these loved to escape from the dusty purlieus of the law and get some fresh air into their lungs at Brighton. They walked on the Hove Lawns or by the sea wall, with hats in their hands, relieved from the heavy atmosphere of the Law Courts.

Curiously enough, after that one meeting, my father said that the Garmoyle marriage would never come off. I will return to this at a later stage, when speaking of his odd premonitions.

Of course we juveniles cared little for the fame of such people, but we rejoiced in the presence of certain local celebrities. For instance, "Brandy Balls", who was supposed to be like Benjamin Disraeli, and who moved up and down in the region of the West Pier selling his sweets; a blind man who sat with a huge Bible on his knees and read out of it in a monotonous voice, reading by touch, not from Braille, but an embossed type that gave each letter complete; the original and only Captain Collins of the *Skylark*; Mrs. Crowe, the bathing woman, dark, terrible, wading out in the water in large voluminous serge skirts (we were too old to dread the awful dippings that she gave to innocent babes); last but not least Mr. Rudd, proprietor of the Punch and Judy Show.

Whether in their own house or in lodgings, my father and mother hospitably received their friends. Guests came to dinner at the King's Road rooms, notably their old friends Mr. and Mrs. Nye Chart. Mr. Chart, proprietor of the theatre, was soon to vanish, leaving behind him a youngish widow and a much embarrassed state of affairs. What she made of things is, I think, well known; and I will speak of it later. They had one child—a little boy—who was always very beautifully dressed, an elegant child, but rather delicate and fragile. At the





W. B. MAXWELL, AGED SIXTEEN







end of the last night of the Christmas pantomime that came after her husband's death, Mrs. Nye Chart and the little boy, both in deep mourning, appeared on the stage, and I think she made a speech. A pathetic figure, standing there facing the public, facing the whole world, and asking for consideration and support. She was to receive both.

Another dinner guest was Sir Cordy Burrows—Sir Cordy, with his genial, downright manner, Brighton's popular doctor, and its immensely popular mayor for three years in succession. His statue stands in the Pavilion Gardens.

Another professional man who came to dine with us was Mr. Cherryman, the dentist of Ship Street. When we were ailing Sir Cordy always attended us, and when our teeth were wrong, and they often were, we went to Mr. Cherryman. Both of them flatly refused ever to accept payment for their services, their reason being that they admired my mother as an author, and they had both known her and my grandmother for a long time. One cannot expect children to go hoppingly to a dentist, but we really liked old Mr. Cherryman. He had ruddy cheeks and very thick eyebrows, and was clean shaven. We highly approved of this last fact, for we had suffered under another dentist, who added a torment of beard-tickling to the usual agonies. Although over seventy years of age, Mr. Cherryman was altogether hale and hearty. His chief amusement was shooting, and he either had a shoot or shared in one on the other side of Lewes. For the purpose of the sport he kept three dogs—pointers—who lived with him in Ship Street. They were sleek handsome creatures, amiable and gentle, and extraordinarily sensible. They were sent for walks by themselves. Mr. Cherryman opened the front door and told them to go as far as the West Pier and come straight back, taking care not to get into trouble either going or returning. Then off they trotted, the three of them, down Ship Street and along the Front. We sometimes met them discreetly jogging along. They did not cut us, but could not stop to be patted. Cab drivers,



boatmen, and all such people knew Mr. Cherryman's dogs.

Our rooms were graced at tea-time once or twice by the presence of another well-known Brightonian. This was old Lord Edward Gordon Lennox or Lord Something-else, for I am shaky as to the Christian name. He was a kindly, genial, chuckling person, a son of that Duchess of Richmond who gave the famous Ball at Brussels before the Battle of Waterloo, and he himself had been present at it. This circumstance entranced my father, and the old boy himself was proud of it.

"Listen, children," said my father. "What do you think of this! Lord Edward here——" and my father told us about his being at the Ball.

"Yes, I was there," said Lord Edward, with a sort of crowing delight.

"Think of it," my father went on. "Isn't it wonderful? I am sure Lord Edward won't mind if you ask him questions."

"Not a bit," said Lord Edward. "But it's quite true. I was there."

Two or three times then he repeated the assurance in the same queer tone of cheerful satisfaction. "I was there. Not a doubt of it. I was there."

This was quite convincing, what there was of it, and we never got any more out of him.

Years began to pass by faster and I did not mark their progress.

We went many times to Brighton, and always in the autumn. It was to "build us up" for the winter. One year friends lent us a house—the house at Hove called St. Helen's Lodge and now converted to an hotel. It was a nice-looking gentlemanly house, and very tastefully furnished; but right out there at Hove we felt too far from the centre of things, cut off, exiled. We much preferred our old lodgings by the Ship Hotel.

We were back in the lodgings during the season that made roller-skating an immensely popular amusement. It fascinated us. I believe there were several rinks, but



the fashionable one was at Mellison's Hall, the large building that connects Middle Street and West Street, the same building that is now frequented and known as Sherry's. At Mellison's, especially on Saturday afternoons, the scene was very bright and animated, with the *élite* of the district as well as all the best visitors assembled there. The string band of the Royal Horse Guards played, drowning in delicious melody the ugly scrooping sound of the rollers.

Well then, on a certain Saturday afternoon I had for skating companion Miss Ada Wright, one of several daughters in a family of friends. She was pretty, graceful, kind, and fully grown up. I thought it unutterably sweet of Miss Wright to accept me, an immature youth, as her cavalier. In an astrakhan toque, a red jacket, and, I think, some gold about her black skirt, she drew many admiring glances from hardy adult males. I wore one of my blue suits as usual. Her hands in mine, I was blissfully skating with her, floating with her nearer and nearer towards Paradise, when I clumsily bumped somebody, lost my balance, and had a sudden tumble, falling with a crash to the sitting posture. I got up unhurt, but had a dreadful feeling that my trousers were injured. I put my hand behind, and it seemed that the trousers were no longer there. Not quite so bad as that. Only a tremendous rent in the seat.

With a mumbled excuse to Miss Wright and a promise to return at once, I backed away.

I ran to the lodgings, which were close by, changed into another pair of trousers, and was back at Mellison's putting on my skates again within twelve minutes. But I had lost Ada Wright and I did not recover her. I watched yearningly the black fur toque and the smiling face as without remission they swept past. She seemed to be handed from one partner to another, as if in a delightful game from which I was rigorously excluded. Oh, the bitterness of it ! I asked myself a Shakespearian question. Could Heaven be so envious ?

During the weeks of succeeding autumns at Brighton



I gained the goodwill of Harry Nye Chart, son of Mrs. Chart, the theatre owner. I was attached to him at once. He became and ever afterwards remained my best and closest friend outside the family circle. Our feelings never changed towards each other. We might be separated, but when we came together it was to find that nothing had been lost. The thread of our friendship could be picked up where we had dropped it. It had been dropped but never broken. In later life to my regret we drifted apart, seeing each other rarely, more rarely, then not at all. Yet I am sure that he still thought of me as I did of him, with undimmed affection.

But for fits of unreasoning sadness that I never shook off till I was a married man, I had a happy childhood. Certainly I was fortunately situated, with kind and generous parents, who really grudged us nothing—not even the most valuable thing that they possessed—their time. I see now how good my father was in taking us about with him, when naturally he must have preferred to have my mother for his sole companion.

For summer holidays we went twice to Brittany and once to Switzerland. My recollection of the first sight of “abroad” as given to me by a small French port at dawn is extraordinarily clear. An immensely long quay, empty of life except for one or two dismal men uttering dismal cries, as they assisted our small vessel to warp itself with ropes and windlasses to the stone wall. High narrow houses, built of dingy unnatural bricks, with here and there a slated upper story. The most melancholy-looking church. And presently a horrible fantastic train, with locomotive of an impossible build, black, dirty, its smoke dark, heavy, pestilential; dirty black coaches, and on top of one or two of them an excrescence like a sentry box, and a seat for one person, presumably the guard. It was like a train puffing towards one out of a bad dream. Then, if you please, a bugle sounding—a bugle blown instead of a whistle by a suddenly emergent railway servant in blue canvas, about to work some points. Strangeness, discomfort, foreignness, and all



beneath the cold unfriendly light of earliest day ; little more than twilight, cold, utterly cheerless, seeming to tell one that it will always be like this, that there never is any warmth and sunshine in France.

The strongest impressions made upon me by Switzerland were the dark-walled abode of the Prisoner of Chillon and the Schweitzerhof Hotel at Lucerne. This was the first of the well-managed Swiss hotels that were soon to be found not only among the Cantons but all over Europe. It was conducted by the Hauser Brothers. The resident Mr. Hauser knew my father, and he came out to the steps of the hotel to give us a delightful welcome. Within the house all things surpassed the most sanguine expectation. The place was luxurious, comfortable, absolutely idyllic when compared with the bad hotels of the period. It must really have been so, or it could not have stood the test of time as well as it has done. Quite fifty years later I went there with my wife and children, and they were as pleased as I had been. A Mr. Hauser came out upon the steps to welcome us. Not the same Mr. Hauser, of course, but everything else was the same.

On these excursions I did one or two lamentably bad water colour drawings, while my mother, who drew and painted excellently, sat beside me and dashed down a fine bold impressionist sketch of the view that I attacked so feebly.

Nevertheless it had been decided that I was to be an artist, and nothing altered the decision.

Riding introduced another cheerful element to life at Lichfield House. For years my mother had ridden with my stepsisters. My stepbrothers also rode. Now it was our turn to get into the saddle.

My first pony, a round-barrelled mouse-coloured friendly creature, was called Daisy, and I received my first riding lessons from our incomparably precious servant Knight. On foot with Daisy held by a leading rein, he took me round and round Richmond Green, now walking, now running, as the pace varied. Himself a beautiful horseman, he imparted such rudiments of



the art as I could absorb. Soon I acquired a seat sufficiently firm to enable him to report that I would not fall off without any reason.

After this report I lost my instructor. Knight's many duties claimed him. He was our coachman and had much driving to do ; he accompanied the ladies riding, in the full dress of the period, and very smart and neat he looked with silk hat, black coat, silver buttons, leather belt, white breeches, top boots ; if a horse fell sick he sat up all night with it. I was handed over to a groom called Vanning, who was mounted for his task and so could take me far afield. We had long jolly rides together chiefly in Richmond Park, going out nearly every afternoon for some months.

In setting down the recollections of youth, a great difficulty is that of selection. "To omit, to omit, to omit," said Stevenson. "There if we knew it lies half our art." But the glamour of the ego is a confusing light in which to write. All sorts of little things concerning oneself may seem full of interest, and yet nobody else perhaps will be in the smallest degree interested by them. It is hard to measure how much one can safely say, and how much more one should leave unsaid. But at least I will not shirk the disclosure of ugly and discreditable facts when they rise up to confront the backward-glancing eye.

As I have suggested, my love of my mother was the whole world. I not only worshipped her, she was a necessity to me. I could not have lived then without her, and I had firmly determined to commit suicide if she died. Yet with all this strong undeviating emotion I consented sometimes to deceive her.

It used to happen on Sundays, and it began when Harry Nye Chart was with us at Richmond. My mother regularly attended the morning service at the parish church. She had sittings there in the body of the church. She liked the service and did not mind its length. The sermons of Canon Proctor, the vicar, which were at once scholarly, eloquent, and cordially sympathetic, pleased her from their very beginning to their



almost unreachable end. I knew the expression of her face while she listened with a kind of sweet gravity and gentle approval. Habitually I sat beside her, but on occasions, especially if she had another companion, I would go upstairs to the gallery and sit there, joining her again at the end of the service.

Harry Chart at once declared a preference for the gallery, and my mother of course made no objection. But then soon Harry suggested that instead of going up there to undergo all that long weariness we might just as well slip off for a jolly ramble along the river bank and return in time to take our place waiting at the church door when the congregation poured forth. He said that the affair always lasted close upon two hours. We could safely stay away for an hour and forty minutes.

We did it, again and again. My dear mother came out slowly, with her face still serious until she saw us there dutifully waiting, and then it brightened for us. We walked home together, Harry and I praising the organist with extreme caution and saying but a very few guarded words about Canon Proctor's sermon.

Considering this malpractice, it seems to me now to be as inexplicable as shameful. How *could* I have done so? But I doubt if at the time I felt any prickings of conscience. Certainly it never struck me as being treachery, or even disloyalty. I can only suppose that in my mind it was really no infringement of the school-boy ethics that I was accepting at the school on the hill to which I went as a day boy. It belonged to the category of "playing truant". And when was *that* ever estimated a crime?

Adopting a custom of my schoolboy friends, I did something else that now appears disgraceful. "Willing to add to my income," as the widows of clergymen say in advertisements, I sold surplus garments.

Mr. Chambers lived first in Church Place and then in the Quadrant. He was the typical Jew of the second-hand clothes trade. Smallish, grey-haired, with the thickness of voice or pronunciation that is always attributed to the humbler people of his race, and eyes



that in a moment would become watery as though they were on the point of shedding tears, he came forward through festoons of overcoats and trousers from the dark little parlour behind his shop and asked what he could do for one.

"For me to purchase? Thank you, sir. Let me see, may I?"

He was always courteous, and even kindly in manner.

"Oh, surely not, sir? A lot of money to ask, isn't it? And in such poor condition! Really worn out." While speaking he refolded the article, pressed it with his open palm, and handed it back to me, turning away then as if the interview was over.

"A moment, Mr. Chambers!"

Then the negotiation recommenced. Of course he defeated one. In spite of the politeness he was a hard man at a bargain.

If one caught his wife alone one could obtain better terms from her. Mrs. Chambers was comparatively young, tall and well developed, rather handsome as I remember, and quite a good sort. My trick was to pretend consideration for her.

When she refused the price, I said: "Well, I mustn't push you, and then make Mr. Chambers angry with you. No, I won't be so selfish and get you into trouble with Mr. Chambers."

"No one can get me into trouble with Mr. Chambers," she said warmly. She had flushed, and she tossed her head. "If you think I'm afraid of Mr. Chambers you're jolly well mistaken."

"Am I?" And I smiled gently at her. "But it's quite natural, Mrs. Chambers, for a wife to fear her husband."

"Here!" What did you say you wanted?" Mrs. Chambers was furiously determined to vindicate her independence and authority. "Five bob and a tanner? Well, you shall have it"; and she rang the coins down on the counter.

When Mr. Chambers and I next met he reproached me, but not with force, in a plaintive style.



"That was a crool thing you done during my absence"; and his eyes became so very watery that I thought he really was going to cry.

In my unlicensed traffic with the Chambers' establishment I went from bad to worse. They asked for something better. Then they would be able to offer of their own accord a good price. But really these threadbare garments were not a marketable commodity. As previously indicated, I always wore blue suits, made of different weights for winter and summer, but looking the same. I rather liked this uniform method of attiring myself. I fancied that it gave distinction. There was I. Oh, yes, in a blue suit. . . . Now, rolling up a brand-new suit, fresh from the tailor, I took it down to Church Court and sold it.

This deal nearly caused detention at home. I was compelled of course to continue wearing the old suit and to pretend it was the new one, and people stared at me aghast. . . . "Upon my word, that new suit is beginning to look as shabby as the old one. . . . Can't you take more care of your clothes?"

The home circle narrowed. Of my stepbrothers and stepsisters only Polly remained. She was bright-complexioned, pretty, of a gay spirit; accomplished too, as girls who have had a convent education usually are; and possessed of a marvellous ear for music and a pleasant singing voice. She could play upon the piano anything that she had heard.

We saw much of Polly because we now took part in the social life of the house, listening to all the adult talk with great pleasure. There were a few visitors who stayed for as much as a week or ten days at a time. Amongst them, as I mentioned, was dear Charles Reade; and another coming several times in a year was Octave Delpierre, who had been Archiviste at Bruges, and then became the Belgian Consul-General in London. He was big, tall, really a splendid figure of a man, with the fresh healthy complexion of one who has always been abstemious in food, drink, and everything else. His



hair was white, but still full and fast growing. He was learned, widely experienced, highly cultivated. He had one child, his daughter Coralie, a well-educated, handsome young woman much older than ourselves.

Delpierre was one of my father's oldest friends, and he had adopted my mother at sight as it were. She valued him and his company enormously.

Returning for a moment to his abstinence and lofty disregard of the pleasures of the table, he had one slight weakness. He loved apricot jam. This of course was always provided for him. And I can remember well the respectful interest with which I watched him eat it at breakfast. His choice of this particular jam impressed me as quite grand and distinguished. It seemed so much in character with such a distinguished person. To this day because of Monsieur Delpierre I regard apricot as the most aristocratic of all jams.

Another intimate and esteemed friend was a Frenchman, Eugène Rimmel. Monsieur Rimmel was the famous perfumer. His scents were known in every capital of Europe. There was a riddle about him and his shop in the Strand. "What is the centre (scenter) of the Strand?" Answer—"Rimmel!"

From the windows above the shop we children used to witness the Lord Mayor's Show, or any other pageant which happened to be going that way, while behind us were gathered Monsieur Rimmel's grown-up friends, including various distinguished people both French and English—singers, actors, actresses, authors. Everybody was fond of Monsieur Rimmel. He really was a very remarkable man, who in spite of his wide business—his inventions—his innovations—somehow found leisure to write excellent articles in Paris reviews and translate several of Shakespeare's plays into easy flowing French verse.

Another staying guest, but a less frequent one, I think paying us only an annual visit, was Professor Adolf Neubauer, of a nationality that I never fathomed, who came from the Bodleian Library, where he was Librarian. He was a tremendously learned old boy, supposed to



know thirty-six or more Oriental languages. Speaking our language rather slowly and heavily, he never made the slightest mistake in it. He talked very little, and was impressive in his grave silence. A great solemn mind, with which ordinary and frivolous intellects could not hope to communicate freely ! But my father would chaff him in the most breezy fashion about a lady that he had twice shown over the Library—Miss May Laffan, a good-looking Irish novelist. When so attacked he never responded with anything more than a dry and apparently uncomfortable little smile. He made no protests however. But once, when he was expected, my mother and my stepsister told my father that he must refrain from chaffing Mr. Neubauer. It was disrespectful. My father submitted, shrugging his shoulders and subsequently obeying the order. Then, after the first day or two, Mr. Neubauer, with considerable solicitude, asked my sister if her father had fallen into bad health. Surprised, she said no. He was all right. Neubauer said he was glad to hear it, but it saddened him to observe my father's loss of high spirits. His manner once so gay had changed to sadness, or preoccupation. He was sure his old friend had something on his mind.

"What on earth makes you think this?" asked my sister Polly, becoming solicitous herself.

"Well," he said, "Mr. Maxwell has altogether dropped that amusing chaff about Miss Laffan."

"What! You *liked* it?" said Polly.

"Oh, very much indeed," said old Neubauer, slowly contorting himself in a quiet mirthful memory. "It was so very droll."

They had then to tell my father to start the chaff again. And he did so—much to the guest's satisfaction.

Hanging on the words of these and other learned or otherwise impressive people I was struck by the weight and conviction with which they uttered prophecies.

"There will be a restoration in France. France is essentially monarchical. No republic can last in it." . . .

"Russia will never make war again. She is too poor."

. . . "A long war has become impossible in Europe."



The bankers would not allow it to go on ; and without the approval of the bankers of course nothing nowadays can be done." . . . I have selected for record these from many wise sayings, because I was impressed when hearing them and I remembered them long enough to see how completely they had failed as predictions of the future.

But one, as I remember, that really hit the mark, was made by a very charming old man—Count Orsi.

He was an Italian, exiled for political offences, and living quite contentedly in London; where he proposed to end his days. These could not in fact be very many, for he was really old. He had grown so thin as to seem almost without flesh on his bones, gaunt as a mountain bird, indeed birdlike with his great beak of a nose and small bright eyes. Dressed in sombre black clothes, he walked up and down in the sunlight and talked to Fanny and me. He had invented a flying machine, he told us, and had been working on it for many years, but he was defeated by the difficulty of motive power. His steam engine was too heavy. But this difficulty would be surmounted, not for him but for others. "Oh, yes," said Count Orsi, "it is near now. Men are going to fly. Men are going into the air. You will see them—although I may not—flying—flying—smoothly too, and easily." While saying this he had stretched out his arms, and he held them outstretched, gently swaying his body, and rising to the tips of his toes. Really then he looked exactly like a bird about to leave the ground.

Fanny and I agreed afterwards that it had given us an illusion. We almost expected him to soar away.

Looking back, I see that we received many foreigners at Lichfield House. I liked seeing them. They seemed to us so picturesque, so "colourful", as one might say nowadays, and some of their high-sounding titles seemed to give them a special prestige. Baron Tauchnitz, the founder of the Tauchnitz Library, came



with an attendant friend, who was like an A.D.C. following his General. The Baron was altogether very grand. Another baron was the Baron de Ville, a fine handsome Frenchman, a grower of wine, champagne of a good brand. Two more Germans were Gustav Hirsch, also in the wine trade, and Nicholas Trübner, the publisher.

Mr. Trübner, who was a closer friend than those others, was learned, not very big, a dark lean man, with quiet reserved manners. The whole circle in which he moved was much surprised when Monsieur Delpierre's daughter Cornelia accepted him as her husband, because it had seemed that she would probably make a much more brilliant match. Then I must cite the Prince de Vismes and the Marquis de Leuville. Also once or twice we had the Duc de Pomar, son of a friend of my parents, the dowager Lady Caithness. He and his mother reigned for many years at Nice as the acknowledged leaders of cosmopolitan society.

The Prince de Vismes staggered us by his intimately familiar manner with horses. One Sunday afternoon when, somehow or other, we were assembled in the stableyard, he had our modest stud paraded before him. He ran his hand over each horse in a truly professional manner. When it came to the turn of one called Middleton—a sluggish obstinate uninteresting animal that was inclined sometimes to go very short in gait, if not lame—the Prince lifted up one of its hoofs, and, stooping down, smelt the inside of it. And still in that crouching attitude, glancing round, and speaking over his shoulder, he gave us the name of an incipient disease of the frog. Knight, our thrice-faithful coachman, said of him afterwards, with much respect, that he was more knowledgeable than half the vets.

The Marquis de Leuville was really tremendous ; a great handsome exuberant fellow, with a broad chest, long curling hair, and a jovial ringing voice. He wrote poems, and issued them widely. On Sundays when he came to us he drove down in a clattering mail phaeton with a matched pair of horses. He wrote an enthusiastic



poem about the tornado of Samoa, that disastrous storm that caught the warships of different nations at the mouth of a big harbour on a lee shore and destroyed all but one of them. The British ship fought its way to safety, fighting the storm inch by inch till it got away, and the Americans and Germans on their doomed vessels driving to death nevertheless gallantly cheered the Britons for their invincible seamanship. I believe that de Leuville, as well as poetising him, struck a medal for Captain Kane of the *Calliope*. But the brave sailor with regret was compelled to refuse it, saying—in effect—that he could not take medals from anybody but his sovereign.

Certainly the most notable of our exotic band was an Austrian, Count Something-or-other. He had met friends of ours in London, and had craved permission to visit us. It is dreadful that I should have forgotten his name, because not only has it been, so to speak, on the tip of my tongue, but it speedily achieved a European notoriety. He was a good-looking elegant person, of early middle life, with a fine Austrian manner, and we admired him. He had a wife in Austria, and would soon be going back to her. He did so, and then was accused of murdering her. He and she were lodging at an inn high up in the Austrian Alps. One afternoon they went for a drive together, being carried still higher—I think somewhere near the Stelvio Pass. At a certain point he and she left the carriage for the purpose of making a gentle climb and a short cut to another point a mile or two further on, to which the carriage was to proceed, and there wait for them. A very long time passed, and the driver of the carriage at the appointed place had grown anxious, when the Count appeared. The Count asked eagerly if the Countess had been seen anywhere. He said that they had parted company because he wished to clamber over some rocks that would have been too steep for her. He stayed perhaps for an hour or more vainly looking for her, and then went down to the inn to see if he could find her there. But not a sign of her had been seen. Then he sat down by himself and had dinner, which consisted of a nice dish of veal



cutlets. He ate with appetite, and then went out to renew his search. The poor lady was found late that night dead at the bottom of a precipice, and it seemed probable that the Count had pushed her over.

Now at his trial a great deal was made of that dish of cutlets, and the question aroused debates of profound interest. Was the eating of dinner the act of a guilty man, or an innocent one? Which way did it point? Much can be said on both sides. It was argued very plausibly that the hearty meal was almost conclusive proof of innocence, for a murderer carefully on his guard against arousing suspicion, careful as to everything he did and everything he said, would have acted inability to eat, an overwhelming anxiety that had robbed him of appetite as if for ever. Whereas an innocent man, having nothing to conceal, and with the hunger that naturally follows on the heels of emotion, would not have hesitated to satisfy the need for food before making fresh efforts. On the other hand, for the prosecution it was urged that guilt and guilt alone could have produced the callousness required for having a comfortable meal in such circumstances. It was a nice point for psychologists.

A few more of our guests were almost foreigners but not quite.

One of these was Mr. Schloesser, with a beautiful wife who was too soon taken from him.

Another was Mr. Costa, a wealthy diamond merchant. I believe it was Costa himself, or at least somebody closely connected with his firm, who recut the Koh-i-noor diamond. That was a bold deed, the reduction to half its weight and size of one of the world's biggest diamonds in order to change a dull poorly shaped stone without a flash to it into a lively fiery brilliant. But the experts were justified of their confidence. The recutting was a complete success. Naturally the task took a long time. It was watched with anxiety to its slow fulfilment. The great Duke of Wellington very often, if not every day, as many people said, went to see with his own still



keen old eyes how the work was progressing. The Costas lived in Park Crescent, and because of their wealth were able to be lavish of expense when giving a party. Fanny and I went to one of their juvenile parties, and found everything being done in the grandest style, with an orchestra, a magic lantern, a ventriloquist, and a conjurer. Even the things that the conjurer amazingly pulled out of his hat and distributed were valuable presents well worth having. Miss Costa, the only child of the house, acted as hostess, and although not more than fourteen years of age at the outside, discharged all hospitable duties admirably, and with a smiling calmness and self-possession that were really remarkable in one so young. I can see her as I write these lines—a slim graceful girl, with dark hair and an olive complexion, dressed in a satin frock of flame colour, a colour that suited her most perfectly. Round her smooth neck she wore pearls. Before the evening ended I had altogether lost my heart to her. I should perhaps add that this sudden mislaying of the heart was an accident that now more and more frequently befell me. . . .

Still one more was Mr. Mortimer, who except that he talked and wrote English as Englishmen do, might really be counted French. He looked French. He told us once that he had had a French wife, but he never mentioned her again. James Mortimer, or Jimmy Mortimer, as he was usually called, edited *The London Figaro*, a smart gossip journal that enjoyed quite a good circulation. Beyond this Jimmy was and had long been dramatic critic of a London daily paper.

He was fond of chess and played so excellently that he had been enrolled as one of the *Masters* of the game. Those versed in the matter will know what this means. We young people liked chess. My sister Polly, a very strong performer as we thought, had taught us. We challenged Mr. Mortimer to play her, making an exhibition match of it.

Readily consenting, he said that before the match started we were to select any piece on the board that



belonged to him and with it he would checkmate Polly. It sounded a vainglorious boast, but one fraught with excited interest. After doubt and discussion we chose the most insignificant-looking of his pawns. I think then that he put a ring from his finger round the pawn. If so the identification mark was not necessary. We were not likely to lose it from our sight.

The battle started briskly, and went on with murderous exchanges and general havoc. To escape danger the king became forced to change his situation often. But so far the pawn had not moved.

Time passed. The scene of great affairs grew emptier. At last furtively the pawn stepped forth. Slowly, step by step, it advanced, and all our attention was concentrated upon it. We knew its deadly purpose. I think it seemed to us like one of the great assassins of history—Felton about to stab the Duke of Buckingham, Charlotte Corday and Marat, Booth and Abraham Lincoln. Nearer and nearer he drew to his illustrious victim, who was vainly struggling to maintain his rule over a dissolving realm. At last he struck. "Checkmate!" said Mr. Mortimer.

My sister leaned back in her chair, smiling, I think relieved after the fatigue of resistance—while we, in a flutter of awe-struck admiration, wiped our foreheads.

That summer or the next, Jimmy unexpectedly produced a grown-up daughter from nowhere and planted her on us. She was an amiable black-browed creature and very amusing at first with her broken English. We liked her. No one could have helped liking her. But she stayed with us longer, much longer, than had been anticipated. I believe that finally Mr. Mortimer asked if we would like to retain her indefinitely. We gave the answer that he as Editor must often have given. We would wish to accept the offer, but lack of space forbade. We honestly valued Miss Mortimer's company, but her room had become more valuable.



## IV

### ARS LONGA

I WAS to be an artist. My drawings had been shown to Mr. Frith, the famous creator of *The Derby Day*, *The Railway Station*, and *Ramsgate Sands*; and he said that, although he might often have doubts, in my case he did not hesitate to say that I should take up his profession. Another Royal Academician, Mr. W. C. T. Dobson, echoed this flattering opinion. Old Mr. Edward Duncan, famed for his water-colours, said much the same. I wonder why. They were three kind old friends of my father and mother, and, bless their kind old hearts, they were perhaps biased by kindly feeling. Or had I really the potential qualities, awaiting the care and development that they never received.

Be that as it may, at the age of fourteen I persuaded my too indulgent parents that I had much better leave school at once and begin art studies without an hour's further delay.

We all used to say that our school was an atrociously bad one, but looking back I am inclined to think that it was a most astoundingly good one. The education it afforded was very modern. The two men who kept it were Fynes Clinton, from Oxford, who had the classical side, and R. Hawkins, from Cambridge, who taught us mathematics. Each of them was very much the gentleman. Only two events of all my school days are memorable.

The first of them is making the acquaintance of the Trevor family. There were four boy Trevors, including Leo, the most gifted of them. Leo became my close friend to the end of his days—and I hope to speak of him again. Soon then we enrolled in our most intimate



circle the Weigall family, the six sons of Mr. Henry and Lady Rose Weigall, who had a delightful old white-walled Georgian house at Ramsgate with grounds so extensive as to contain a private cricket ground. Of our own family there were only my two brothers and myself ; but all added together we made a fairly large gang. The four Trevors and all six Weigalls were fond of cricket, and one of them, Gerry Weigall, soon attained distinction in the game, playing for Cambridge University and for many years in the Kent County team. Trevors and Weigalls could put a full cricket team into the field by recruiting the father of Trevors as eleventh man. Mr. Frederick George Brunton Trevor, elderly but thin and alert, had kept wicket for England and was still quite useful behind the sticks. He held a high position in the India Office. This service was with John Company when he joined it. Of the Trevors all but the eldest son, Fred Garrick, have passed away—Leo, famous actor, playwright, wit ; Harry Trevor, who became a musician and composer, and finally a valued musical critic ; Colonel Philip Trevor, who developed after much army service into “Dux,” the writer on sport. All Weigalls I am glad to say survive, and to my eyes without the least sign of advancing years. Dear old Bill Weigall is Recorder of Gravesend ; Fitzroy, the eldest, is a respected solicitor at Margate ; Archie, ex-Governor, politician, and what not else, is known to unnumbered hosts of people ; the others, Gerry, Lewis, Buckie, are all going strong. Their charming sister, Rachel Weigall, is still as ever active on behalf of less fortunate people's welfare.

The other event of importance to me was an injury to my foot. A bad strain acquired in skating, and perhaps afterwards neglected, resulted in considerable damage. One or two small bones of my foot must have been broken and others were displaced, so that I soon began to suffer extreme pain whenever I used my foot freely. My mother took me to Mr. Ericson, who was then at the very top of the tree as a surgeon, and he pronounced that I ought to have a rather complicated operation.



Meanwhile he caused to be made for me a most diabolical instrument, in which the whole of my leg to the knee was tightly encased. Then, by turning a key, the foot was gradually wrenched in the direction of its proper position. I was told to wear this at night, but the torture it inflicted was so great that I did not wear it long. Doctor Anderson of Richmond, in whom we had great faith, strongly advised me not to consent to the operation, which he said was an extremely dangerous one, and in his experience rarely successful. It might probably make me a complete cripple. I accepted then for good and all my disabilities, such as they were. My limit of walking became about four miles in the day. If I walked more than that the pain returned at night, and was as bad as ever. Thus I went on continuously. My four miles limit allowed me to play one round of golf, and I played a second at my peril. Fortunately this trouble never interfered with my riding.

Calderon's Art School in St. John's Wood was recommended for me, and there I soon started work. The Metropolitan Railway took me from Richmond to the Edgware Road. Thence it was an easy walk to St. John's Wood. I had a first class season ticket and I thoroughly enjoyed the journey to and fro. The Metropolitan Railway had always been valued by me for its romantic characteristics. More especially the delightful circumstance that it abandoned the earth's surface and ran on underground. It was known as "The Underground". I had only one tunnel, from Bishop's Road to Edgware Road, but happily it was a long one, and it had a most delightful amenity in the form of a junction or division, where the Inner Circle branched away towards Praed Street. Looking back at this point one saw the mouths of two tunnels, very faintly lit by lamps on the wall.

Another delight of my daily journey was that from the Royal Oak Station onwards I had a fine view of the Great Western Railway, and often saw the splendid broad gauge trains passing. All little boys love railways, and I was very small when the broad



gauge first exercised its fascination for me. This never ceased.

The curriculum at Calderon's was severely old-fashioned. One drew from the antique long and assiduously, finally making some highly finished studies of the complete figure as shown in the plaster cast of the Apollo Belvedere, the Venus of Milo, or some other of the classic band. One of these drawings in chalk, and stippled with a paper stump and a fine pencil, took as long as two or three months to complete. After that labour one passed on to the Life, first from the nude and still in black and white, then beginning to paint from costumed models. This was the full course at Calderon's, but few followed it to its latest stages, for most of the students wanted to get into the Royal Academy Schools. For them Calderon's was really a cramming establishment. His success in obtaining acceptances was very considerable.

After entrance to the Academy Schools the student was held "on probation" while he did another set of drawings. If these were palpably inferior to those that had gained his admittance it was taken to mean that he had been given undue external help with the first lot and he was turned out.

At Calderon's we had a young man named Ogilvie who had been in and out of the Academy Schools three or four times. Tidings of his rejection were made to us by himself, and always in the same odd way. Suddenly during class hours we heard him playing the bagpipes that he produced on any very sad occasion. Sympathisers hurried from the studio. Sure enough there was Ogilvie slowly marching round the courtyard and blowing on the pipes a most piteous, doleful lament. But I do not think that he really regretted the failure that had reinstated him at Calderon's, because he nourished an ardent affection for a pretty girl student, Miss Ducane. I do not think he had ever spoken to Miss Ducane, and she certainly had not a suspicion of his regard for her. A gentle retiring creature, and almost absurdly industrious as girls so often are, she bent



her slender form towards the white board making black chalk marks on it, while Ogilvie, silent, unnoticed, continued to feast his eyes on her.

As soon as I saw it, the work of many of my fellow-students aroused in me an awestruck admiration. Some of them seemed to have such great power. Yet among them all very few made names for themselves or met with marked success when their student days were over. One of these was Dudley Hardy, the fine colourist, whose work was admired in France as well as England. Another student, Waterlow, I believe became the distinguished Mr. Waterlow of the Royal Academy. One more was Lady Frampton. She married the late Sir George Frampton, and has transmitted her talents to a brilliant son, Mr. Frampton, A.R.A. I should add William Parkinson—and perhaps too a nice-looking Miss Huxley who soon married John Collier.

In this connection it is sad to reflect how very few people seem to come to anything of importance after their student days.

Take musical students as an example. When we lived close to the Royal College of Music I used to see every morning droves of girls going there, some carrying violins or 'cellos, and all day long pianos sounded from the building. And I used to ask myself, "What will become of them?" The uttermost to which they would probably attain would be a place in some quartette or trio playing through the summer at a seaside hotel. The singers too! How little real chance they have of making good. Not one in thousands, I suppose, reaches grand opera. And Madame Clara Butt told me that, for the concert platform, one gift is an absolute necessity—unhappily it is a gift, and not to be achieved by hard work—that is, beauty, or at least real prettiness. Without this, Madame Butt told me, it is really futile for a girl to expect to go far as a concert singer. Then, considering the chances on the lower levels of the instrumentalists, it seems to me that these are always lessening. Once every theatre had an orchestra—now only those who do musical plays employ one. At the



cinema theatre too there were orchestras. In the most humble of them one saw at least a pianist. Now mechanical music has ousted them.

For the first term I worked diligently, although from the beginning I felt that heavy sense of my incompetence, when compared with others in the school. They showed so much originality as well as power. Some I thought were more like masters than pupils. When at the end of the term we had an informal exhibition of sketches and studies done away from the school I was still further overwhelmed. It seemed obvious that I was completely outclassed. I judged that my chances of success as an artist had disappeared, and that, as an Irishman might add, they had never been there.

Next term I worked less, and after a few more terms I became almost completely idle. Deserting my easel I would go for long walks, or play billiards at the Eyre Arms, or wander round to the rooms of fellow-students. I had made one or two friends to give me moral support in my idleness.

Sometimes for a midday snack we went to a confectioner's in the Circus Road. A few doors away there was a music shop, and outside this one day I saw a very smart hansom cab in waiting. It had quite an air of festival about it, the vehicle itself all shining, the horse well groomed and glossy, with an artificial rose on each side of the bridle, the driver in his best clothes, with a silk hat which really looked brand new. He was waiting for the gentleman who lodged over the music shop, and it really was an occasion ; for the lodger upstairs was no less a person than Charles Bradlaugh, about to go down to the House of Commons and make another struggle for the occupation of his seat there. Year after year, at the Opening of Parliament, he made his effort, asking to take the oath and being refused ; then himself refusing to leave the Chamber when called upon to do so, and being ejected, fighting desperately with five or six policemen. He was a very powerfully built man, with a large frame, well over six feet in height, but no longer young, and it has been said that these fierce



physical encounters during which he had the clothes almost torn from his back, seriously injured his health. After some years an Act was passed that enabled the House to accept Mr. Bradlaugh on his own terms, and for another year or two he sat there, liked and respected by all. But at the beginning he was a by-word, an outlaw, a notorious malefactor in the view of nearly all his country. It is difficult to believe how strong these feelings of detestation were, or the violence of the language with which they were expressed. Atheist, foul atheist, blasphemer, shameless rebel, were mild terms for him. In those days, perhaps, the next best hated person in the realm was Bradlaugh's colleague, the Senior Member for Northampton, Henry Labouchere. I think that "Labby" roused even more horror than the other, because he was accused of being a traitor to his class, having come of a good family, been educated at Eton and admitted to the Diplomatic Service.

The dear old Metropolitan Railway pleasantly filled hours that might otherwise have been too dull in their vacancy. I would take a train through the tunnel as far as Royal Oak Station, and there alight. At the eastern end of the long platform I would stand waiting, sometimes watch in hand. The afternoon broad gauge express from Paddington was coming. It approached through the arches, of two bridges, and then majestically passed by. It seemed to be going slowly, but already was gaining speed. Finally it travelled, as one knows by its records, at a pace that would be respectable and praiseworthy to-day. I believe that some of the broad gauge locomotives touched ninety miles an hour.

They were really beautiful machines, with their great driving wheels, their high copper-topped funnels, and the impressive outer railing. Later it seemed to betray a really inexplicable lack of imagination and good feeling that the Great Western Railway could not preserve *Lord of the Isles*, or one of the others, as a perpetual reminder of the past, and that the South Kensington Museum alternatively refused to find room for it.



From Royal Oak I went on a little further, and then waited for my particular Metropolitan train. To all who can remember their own boyhood, it may go almost without saying that I had very soon abandoned the comforts of the nicely upholstered first class carriages and taken to the guard's van instead. Two guards were my special friends—Dunford, a tall dark man, a Devonian, and Baker, a stouter, older man, who belonged to the Metropolis. Happy bumpy rides I used to have with Dunford and Baker. From the guard's van to the footplate of the engine was a natural transition. Dunford introduced me to a most agreeable driver and his fireman, and I used to join them at Hammersmith high level station. This point was chosen because it was there that the Metropolitan trains passed on to the South Western line. Henceforth all the way to Richmond there was therefore no supervision by their own officials. If I was observed on the engine nobody troubled to report the irregularity.

It was exciting to ride on the engine in the very slight shelter of about two feet of cab, and, looking through the large glass discs, see the boiler and the funnel, as though they had been the back and head of a horse cantering, jump up and down and spring from side to side. But more exciting still was it to drive the engine. I soon attained to this extreme gratification. The kindly driver taught me exactly what to do, and, as though I had been a child not quite understanding why, I obeyed his orders. The road was easy to learn. One shut off steam at a certain point, and running on slower and slower, finally drew up with the aid of the brakes. The working of the regulator and so on during each run I did in a haphazard style. Anyhow the driver soon had sufficient confidence in me to leave me to my own devices while he sat upon some ledge or box and meditated or talked to his fireman, paying no further attention to me.

Then there came a rainy day, and the metals were as slippery as ice. After mounting the rise from Gunnersbury Station to the railway bridge over the Thames one



shut off steam, and then ran on down a slight incline to Kew Gardens, putting on the brakes two or three hundred yards short of the station. I shut off steam and very soon realised that we were still going much too fast. I applied the brakes violently without the slightest effect. Indeed the train seemed to go even faster still. I pulled some emergency handle that released a shower of sand or gravel in front of the wheels. Nothing was of any avail. We seemed to be positively flying—I suppose about thirty-five miles an hour. The driver, jumping up in perturbation, aided me in every possible way, seeming to pull levers and jerk handles all round him. Suffice it to say that we ran through Kew Gardens Station at the same breakneck pace, and could not pull up the train till near the gas-works at Richmond. Then ignominiously we reversed and came creeping back to Kew Gardens Station, where the stationmaster and all his staff stood waiting for us, with broad grins on their faces and ready chaff on their lips. It should be understood that no such thing as an express had ever been seen on the Metropolitan Railway until this performance of mine. All trains stopped at all stations.

I was afraid that the affair was so scandalous that it would be reported to the Metropolitan people, and that my friend would fall into trouble as payment for his kindness to me. Happily, however, no more was ever heard of the incident.

At last my friend William Parkinson, seeing that I was no good at Calderon's, advised me to move on to Ridley's, a very small and pleasant school that was situated close to the Uxbridge Road. There I attacked the "life", a privilege that I had not earned at Calderon's.

We had night classes for the "nude", and I think I reached my highest achievement in charcoal drawings of these models, done, as I remember, in three evenings—or nine hours' work. Ridley and Parkinson praised me for them.

But they were not quite good enough. Before very long I drifted away from Ridley's, and worked, or



pretended to work, for a year or two by myself at the British Museum. There, at that noble museum, I finally left my easel and drawing-board, and never returned to fetch them away. It was the end of a career slightly before it had started. I renounced my dream of being an artist.

Although I had abandoned art, I did not cease to regard it with respect and admiration. I cannot exaggerate the intense pleasure that I derived from examples of fine painting. My own abortive studies had enhanced this appreciative delight, because I knew now why I admired as well as how much. When looking at a picture I saw its high quality of drawing as well as of colouring, and could understand not only its purpose but its composition.

I remember how, being thus equipped, I passed from picture to picture in the year's exhibition at the Royal Academy, glowing with excitement and satisfaction. In those days the Academy Exhibition was a great annual event. The year's pictures were eagerly discussed. People at dinner parties ran over the big names, Millais, Leighton, Alma Tadema, and asked one another if several of the portraits were not too marvellous. A few of those busy then went on painting almost to the other day, after they had reached a great age—for instance, Sir David Murray, passing from one lovely Scottish loch to another; Farquharson with his sheep in moonlight and snow; and Sydney Cooper with his cattle and meadows.

There was a story of dear old Sydney Cooper—probably an invention—during Lord Leighton's presidency. Purchases for the Chantry Bequests had been under debate, and votes of recommendations were being taken. Filling up his paper Mr. Cooper voted for the purchase of "Cows in Canterbury Meadows by Sydney Cooper, R.A." Then Leighton, always a fine gentleman and yet without the slightest touch of pretension, came to Mr. Cooper, and laying a hand affectionately on his shoulder, begged him to make another choice. "You



know," he said, "one can't vote for one's own work. It's never done." "Never done! What nonsense!" said the kindly simple old man. "I did it last year—and the year before that too."

Among all the painters of the age Sir John Millais stood highest in the regard of the public. With his early work—the Huguenot, the Black Brunswicker, and the others—he had made a great reputation, and nothing ever shook it. The long series of fine pictures—portraits, subjects, landscapes—ran through decade after decade. With his brush he made a large fortune. Thus he could meet advancing years, as one secure, living in an atmosphere still warmed by the sunshine of popular favour.

Indeed I think no one ever received a fuller shower of benefits from Fate. Her gifts were prodigious. Beyond possessing great talent Millais had physical beauty. He was tall, splendidly built, very healthy, handsome in the highest degree, altogether a nobly fine figure of a man.

Yet, when my mother introduced me to him one night after a dinner at the Mansion House, he applauded me for having promptly turned from art and escaped from the most cruel and bitterly disappointing of professions. "What one has to go through!" he said. "Oh, my boy, if you only knew what I myself have been through."

He spoke very kindly and sympathetically, but not as if generously trying to save me from a galling sense of personal failure, rather as if with sad conviction saying words that might warn all young people. Very strange, this. Soon Millais succeeded Leighton as President of the Royal Academy, but unhappily his reign was far too brief.

Now I would like to make the point that all that interest in contemporary painting and sculpture seems to have passed away utterly. People still go to the Academy Exhibition, but they talk very little about it, and in the houses of the well-to-do you scarcely ever see a picture. I have always thought that the painters



themselves were to blame in fostering the tendency towards this state of affairs. The beautiful houses that they built for themselves, naturally much noticed by the Press and inspected with interest by many people, relied for mural decoration on everything except pictures—mouldings, hangings, coloured panels.

As a slight excuse for my lack of assiduity as a student, I might perhaps plead the many interruptions that occurred. The chief of these was our increasingly long visits to the New Forest. My father had built a house there for occasional occupation, and he added to it again and again, till it had quite considerable accommodation. From the time that his health began to fail we settled down almost completely in the Forest. The programme of the year, followed for several successive years, was that we spent most of the summer and all the autumn there, then at the end of the year, either before Christmas or immediately afterwards, we went to the South of France, from which we returned to Richmond in April or early in May, to come back to the New Forest at the beginning of August.



## FAIRIES

AT Lichfield House we all loved the play, and our admiration of actors and actresses produced a fervent but not always faithful hero worship. We substituted fresh deities for old ones. Yet I think the true god of our idolatry, unchallenged, unchanging, holding his place high above the occupants of lesser shrines, was Henry Irving.

It seems to me even now that Irving was perhaps the most remarkable personality in all my memories. Apart from his great gifts as an actor he had a quite irresistible charm. With his white Phœnician face, his dark hair, his long thin hands, and the strange modulations of his naturally musical voice, he was different from ordinary people. He dominated actual scenes as certainly as the artificial ones. Without effort he arrested attention and subjugated imagination. Invincibly he commanded respect. He was like a prince. He had the mingled dignity and remoteness of princes. I do not believe that any one ever took a liberty with Irving.

We always thought of him as a prince, and nothing could have been more princely than his treatment of us. He used to invite my mother to take us to the Lyceum, where we had a box with a room behind it, in which tea and cakes were provided between two of the acts; and kind Bram Stoker, the manager and subsequent author, used to come and talk to us and make sure that we were happy. We saw all those great Shakespearian revivals, one after another, as the guests of Mr. Irving. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, the whole splendid series—each gave us intense delight and if it were possible, made us more completely the thralls of their producer.



Imagine, then, the joy that we experienced early one Sunday afternoon, when Irving walked into the drawing-room at Richmond. He was accompanied by J. L. Toole and Sir Edward Clarke. Together with Mr. Toole he sat chatting with my mother and father, while in the embrasure of a window Sir Edward Clarke condescended, despite his being already a famous advocate, to talk gaily and confidentially to my brother and myself. He seemed to be as devoted to Irving as we were, and he told us charming things about him—of his philanthropy and benevolence, his munificent treatment of subordinates and underlings, his love of pictures, and, unexpectedly, of his slightly distorted sense of humour. These illustrious visitors did not stay long with us. They were going for a drive in Richmond Park.

In those far-off days people, as well as driving, used sometimes to ride to Richmond. On another Sunday a group of horsemen rode down to luncheon at Lichfield House. These were Sir Francis Burnand, Lord Russell of Killowen, Sir Frank Lockwood, Mr. R. D. Lehmann, Harry Furniss, and, I think, Linley Sambourne. They were all members of the Two Pins Club, an organisation formed for such riding excursions, and with a strong *Punch* flavour to it. The Club was named after the two fictional or traditional Pins—Gil-pin and Tur-pin.

Lord Russell, I remember, was an impressive figure with a strong face and a muscular frame. His manner was authoritative, without being dictatorial, but now and then he would say something in a tone of complete finality, when he looked at one sternly, as if adding: "Don't let's hear any more about that. I have said it and I can permit no further argument." This was just before the introduction of the game of Bridge, when my brother and I were much interested in Whist, and had been studying assiduously that scientific and nearly forgotten sport, concerning which the great Cavendish wrote several treatises. Lord Russell played Whist. He talked to us about the game in a most absorbing style, but then all at once he shocked and even staggered us by saying that often a single card was a most useful one



to lead. No statement could possibly have been more unorthodox and startling, because a proper horror of "the singleton" was instilled into one by Cavendish and all the other authorities. We judged then that Lord Russell was a better lawyer than a whist player, and this I believe to have been the fact.

He rode away from our door with Sir Frank Lockwood in attendance on him, and, as they moved off, Sir Frank remained for a moment or two some paces behind. During these moments before he rejoined his chieftain, he amused us by pretending to be a groom, making grimaces and gestures. Big genial Sir Frank was, as everyone knew, a most amusing creature.

At this period I stirred my prevailing indolence sufficiently to attempt a little writing. My mother had suggested that if I did not care to be a painter, I might like to be an author. With her large aid, I wrote a short story and she sent it for me to Edmund Yates. Mr. Yates, who, like so many others, had a strong regard for my mother, published the story in *The World* newspaper, and gave me five pounds for it. Easy money if ever there was such. I next wrote a story for *Truth*. Mr. Labouchere, another person who was devoted to my mother, said he would accept the story if I could allow him to alter it here and there. We then did a sort of collaboration in which "Labby" practically re-wrote my work, and after this the tale was triumphantly published in his journal. I think then that Edmund Yates allowed me to write an article for *The World*, and I know that I wrote several for Mr. Arthur Goddard, Editor of *Society*, a pleasant respectable weekly, which for some time had a good circulation. I think, too, that on my mother's introduction, Mr. Bentley took a story of mine for *Temple Bar*. Thus I had received much encouragement. All the elders agreed that scarcely ever could a young man have had such good encouragement. I myself agreed; and this being so, I stopped working and never wrote another line for many years.

Returning for the moment to the subject of Henry Irving, it would, I think, be difficult for anyone of the



present generation to understand the prestige of the Lyceum Theatre, or how much Irving did to raise the social status of actors and actresses, and how greatly he increased public esteem for the stage as an institution. A first night at the Lyceum Theatre assembled a really distinguished audience. The Lyceum provided something of education for all the world, old as well as young. Young ladies from finishing schools were taken there two or three at a time by their head mistresses. Bishops might go to the Lyceum Theatre, and often did.

I have related how handsomely Irving entertained us, but we had other kindly theatrical hosts. Mr. Toole, surely the most genuinely funny low comedian who ever lived, entertained us with a succession of farces. Mr. John Hollingshead of the Gaiety Theatre sent us a private box whenever we wanted one. The Gaiety was then at the summit of its vogue, with Nellie Farren as a firmly established popular favourite, and a supporting company of people as attractive as Edward Terry, E. Royce, exquisitely lovely sylph-like Kate Vaughan, spritely and pretty Connie Gilchrist, Phyllis Broughton and her sister Emma, together with many subsidiary "lovelies."

The fascination of the Stage remained unmodified with Gerald and Fanny, but to me there came a sharp division in my interest. I continued to admire and delight in the legitimate drama and its brilliant exponents, but this now was only one half of the fascination. The other half had taken a new colour, a fancifulness, a romanticism that arose from my subjugation to stage fairies; for I now looked upon these charming actresses as fairies, whether they actually performed the part of fairies or not. I will try to be more explanatory presently. Suffice it here to say that the spell, perhaps beginning at the Gaiety, was steadily deepened by experiences at the Brighton Theatre with Harry Nye Chart, to whom I paid many visits, especially during the course of the Christmas Pantomime. How we loved those pantomimes! Harry and I, when we were fourteen or fifteen and even older, used to go on in the Harlequinade and



run the gauntlet of the most vigorous pantomime rallies. He and his mother lived in a house next door to the theatre. It was one of the most delightful and best-loved houses that in my long life I have ever entered. Mrs. Nye Chart was truly in her way a valiant and noble woman. Left with the theatre on her hands, as I have said, and considerable financial difficulties, including a heavy mortgage, she was advised by all well-wishing experts to disembarass herself by selling the property for what it would fetch. At the same time they advised her that it probably would not fetch anything at all. Instead of casting away the theatre, Mrs. Chart kept it and literally working night and day for years brought it to a position of triumphant success. The Theatre Royal, Brighton, became quite famous for the excellence of its management. Sooner or later all the best companies played there. Moreover, to avoid any waiting by the most eager of her patrons, she invented the flying matinée, an innovation that caused a great deal of talk. By its use, London successes during their run were brought down to Brighton for a morning performance. It was considered almost miraculous that the same night the actors and actresses should be again in London.

After years of prosperity, Mrs. Chart turned the affair into a company and was able to withdraw a most substantial sum ; but I rather fear that at a much later period this went back into the concern.

From the beginning of her enterprise she had won very solid local support. Men of means, who were residents at Brighton, promptly assisted her to pay off that mortgage. Among her backers, either by financial aid or strong goodwill, were Mr. Treacher, the owner of that fine bookshop at the corner of East Street, Mr. Jack Nye, a very well-known solicitor, Mr. Infield, proprietor of the *Sussex Daily News* and other papers. She was always the absolute ruler, but we used to consider these gentlemen as her Cabinet. One or other of them was usually to be met in the jolly little room called The Treasury that was situated behind the dress circle. They would drop in there during the course of the night's



performance. People who were merely friends were also admitted to this sanctum, and I can remember Marshall Hall and Charles Gill as frequent attendants. More occasionally we met Mr. Phillips, a Shakespearian scholar of repute, who dwelt in the most amazingly capacious bungalow that he had built for himself somewhere on the Downs. It was rather fun on a Sunday afternoon to go up there to call upon him. I think that possibly E. V. Lucas also visited Mrs. Chart in the Treasury, but I did not happen to meet him. At some time or other E. V. wrote a pantomime for her. The pantomimes, which were produced by Mrs. Chart herself, enjoyed long runs and were very profitable. She secured for them the best available talent. The gilded youth of Brighton and Hove sat in the stalls night after night goggling at the fairies.

Mrs. Nye Chart in her prosperity spent money very freely, giving much of it away, and she certainly obtained her reward in the love of her fellow citizens. Brighton honoured her, Brighton was proud of her. Beyond this, one may safely say that she had won the regard of the whole theatrical profession. Yet now, naturally, there are fewer and fewer people who remember her. Among these, no doubt, are Miss Irene Vanbrugh, Miss Violet Vanbrugh, Sir Seymour Hicks, Miss Marie Tempest, Lady Guggisberg, Mrs. Esmond, Sir Martin Harvey, and perhaps that very excellent actor, my good friend Charles Lowndes.

It was at Brighton that I first had speech with fairies ; for after we had seen the pantomime two or three times from the front of the house I used to go with Harry behind the scenes and spend most of the evening there. Harry understood my feeling for fairies and was half amused and half bored by it. But good-natured in this, as in everything else, he gave it full scope. " Miss Nicholson," he would say, " may I introduce my friend ? " ; and there in the wings I stood tongue-tied, spellbound, blinking rapturously while my fairy said a few words, smiled, and flashed her eyes at me. Harry



had called her Miss Nicholson, or Miss Thompson, or whatever her name in a workaday world might be, but that made no difference whatever. For me she continued to be what she had been just now in the limelight with music and song and dance. That was the essence of the matter. The glamour of the stage scene, the fascination of the character they represented, were carried about with them and could not be laid aside at will. Thus when I found myself with one of them outside the theatre, say at a restaurant or a bun shop, I was enjoying an almost miraculous experience, and nothing in my companion's aspect, the dullness of a once bright complexion spoilt by too much grease paint, the tired look in her eyes that had been obliged to do too much flashing, the shabbiness of cloth jackets and fur collars that had suffered far too much wear, could bring me down to earthly commonplace conditions or free me from the magic spell. I should repeat that it was not necessary for them actually to play the part of a fairy. Their role might be that of Badroulbador, Morgiana, Cinderella, or any other ravishing young female of burlesque and pantomime. But fairies was the generic name. In my mind I called them fairies. As a class they were fairies.

Later when I spoke of this to Oscar Wilde he said : " But you were quite right, my dear Willie. They *are* fairies. It is only their mothers who are mortal."

Let me say further, to make all clear, that my feeling was something better and higher than merely being in love. In my courtship of them there was no ulterior motive. I wanted nothing from them but their sweet company.

At the theatre when we wished to cross from the prompt to the other side we either waited for a front scene and crossed behind it or went under the stage through what were called the cellars. I liked the cellars. They were dimly lit, mysterious, with vaults of complete darkness and a gangway that passed amid avenues of wooden columns, ropes, pulleys; while muffled strains of the orchestra leaked through invisible vents and from



overhead through the very boards of the stage flashes of bright light fitfully descended. Down here one evening, in a dark recess, a little innermost bin or special cellar formed by wooden beams and buttresses, I came upon a fairy caught in a trap. Two rough men held her as their prisoner. She was a real fairy, and of course I knew all about her. Presently those two men would hoist her up through the boards, a flood of limelight would pour down to meet her, a bang on the drum and a clash of the cymbals would welcome her as, radiant, smiling, she bounced out upon the scene. This happened now before I had a chance of addressing her.

But next night I was there at the trap again. Night after night I was there. She liked a little chat while waiting for the cue. Our acquaintance under these favourable conditions ripened quickly. Very soon she let me see her out of business hours.

It was my great pleasure and privilege to provide her with some food between the two performances on Wednesdays and Saturdays. As we walked away from the stage door side by side, she moved in music and the dark street was lit with a gentle supernatural light. I have tried to describe my sensations in a story that I called *The Fairy Heliotrope*. I used to take her to Booth's restaurant in East Street, which had a deserved reputation for good honest fare, and it rejoiced me to set before her something with solid nourishment in it and see her eat it. But naturally she did not care to eat alone while I watched with admiring eyes and merely "Bynged" her. So at her request I habitually joined her in the meal itself.

This pleasant custom led on one occasion to my eating three dinners in the same day.

Hearing that I was staying at Brighton, Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Yates very kindly asked me to dine with them informally. They had just moved from one end of the town to the other, leaving a large house on the East cliff and going into a large house at Hove, and Yates writing to me in a manner that was really very gracious and charming if one considered that he was a man of



years, a prominent and important personage, and that I was very young and an insignificant nobody, said that he would like me to inspect the new abode and he particularly wished to show me the room he had made his library. I felt touched, and eager to pay my respects to him. Although he had given me entry to his weekly pages I had not, I think, as yet ever met him. I asked Harry Chart if his mother would mind my accepting the invitation. Harry said no, she certainly would not mind, provided that she had my company at dinner. There could be no great difficulty in this, because Mrs. Chart for business reasons had her dinner early, at a quarter to seven; and when it ended I should still have time to get to Hove for the half-past eight of the untrammelled Yates's. Thus we arranged things.

The day was a Wednesday, and so first I had to do the Booth dinner with that pretty one. She dined earliest of all, for she had to be back in the theatre by about six-thirty.

Mrs. Chart's dinner offered a perceptible task, and I felt a shade heavy as I seated myself at the Hove table. Nevertheless, incredible as it may seem, I ploughed through this third and most considerable of my three repasts without suffering any serious discomfort.

O youth! As Conrad said.

I found that Mr. Yates fully deserved his reputation as a most amusing talker. There were only the three of us there. A place had been laid for their eldest son, Daddy, but he did not come to occupy it. From this date and ever afterwards Daddy Yates lived at Brighton. He had a great number of friends and was a popular member of the Union Club. He died much regretted not long ago.

After dinner we went to the library, an unexpectedly big room at the back of the house that had been originally built for an artist. One could praise it without stint; for Yates with his fine collection of books, many of them most beautifully bound, his handsome furniture, some of which possessed special interest, such as Charles Dickens's desk, had made it a very attractive place. He



delighted me by telling some appreciative stories about my mother and father. He has put on record his regard for both of them. I will postpone a description of Edmund Yates, both as man and author, until he reappears in another context.

In due course Harry Nye Chart went to Trinity, Cambridge, succeeding my brother Gerald there and preceding my brother Ted, to be followed a good many years later by my son Henry. I used to stay with Harry at Cambridge, and I think I must often have regretted having stupidly missed my turn at the grand old college. I stayed with him too at Brighton during the long vacations. Very happy were those summer holidays. The visit of one year I particularly remember.

The whole Gaiety company had come to Brighton to play throughout the race week.

Nellie Farren was supported now by one of the biggest favourites on the stage, Fred Leslie. Leslie was famed for his beautiful voice, his fun, and his originality. He really had a quite remarkable fascination. Nellie Farren on her side had developed into a highly accomplished actress. Irresistibly she made one laugh, and she could almost if not quite make one cry. This was so with a song of hers about a London street arab. She sang it in character with rags and bare feet. Singing it she was no longer Miss Farren, she had changed into a white-faced boy, hoarse of voice, thin of face, a poor little wretch fighting cold, hunger, cruelty, for food to keep him alive, begging with an outstretched hand, shrinking away from a blow. " 'Ere, sir, hold your nag, sir. 'Ere, sir, take your bag, sir? Wretched little arab forced to fly ". . . The immense success of the Arab song consolidated Nellie Farren's fame. Those two gifted people, Nellie Farren and Fred Leslie, were wonderful as "opposite numbers". With untiring pleasure I attended every performance.

Towards the end of the week Mrs. Chart decided to give us, including Miss Farren and Mr. Leslie, a happy



day, by taking us over to Lewes Races. For this purpose we went to see Mr. Dupont, the well-known Brighton job master, who said that he would provide a break with four horses.

Mrs. Chart, however, demurred to the four-in-hand, explaining that she thought it might look a little ostentatious, and she particularly desired to be inconspicuous, and indeed quite unnoticeable. But Mr. Dupont said No, four horses were required by the hilly road, and he would send on the box an extra man who could be useful in various ways. The "turn-out" on a race day would not be in the least unusual or noticeable. "It is not as if your party were going to make a noise, or sing, or do anything likely to attract attention."

That indeed seemed obvious, and dear Mrs. Chart finally gave the order. In due time, then, we set forth from the little house by the theatre, a sober, dignified cortège, the four horses trotting sedately. It was a lovely August day. One's spirits rose immediately. Presently we were bowling along the Lewes Road in a procession of vehicles—all horse-drawn—no nasty smelly motors yet visible. Our party consisted of those two theatrical stars, with Monsieur and Madame Verdier—great friends of Mrs. Chart—and I think one or two others besides Harry and myself.

Monsieur Verdier was an elderly, but very well preserved Frenchman, with an innocent, kindly disposition, and much "gaité de cœur". He was always beautifully dressed; often in a pearl grey frockcoat with revers of watered silk, washing waistcoat, dark mauve tie and large pearl pin, white spats, polished boots. To-day he was as happy as a child, smiling, even snapping his fingers in satisfaction; the "gaité de cœur" increasing with every mile we passed.

We drew up among the other carriages on the race-course, where we could have a good view from our brake itself, and soon were busily occupied with the ample luncheon that Mrs. Chart had provided for us. Dupont's second man unpacked everything and acted as waiter. All through the meal Monsieur Verdier still further



enlivened us with amusing chatter. When everybody else had finished he was still eating, probably having missed chances by his cheery talk. Miss Farren, Harry Chart, Fred Leslie, and I then left the brake, and went for a stroll through the crowd and past all the tents. We were away for about half an hour, and on our return we heard that this had been an eventful time for the others. It appeared that very soon after our departure Monsieur Verdier in his now explosive joyfulness threw an egg at somebody, presumably at Madame Verdier. The egg, fortunately for Madame Verdier, but unfortunately for her cheerful husband, entirely missed the mark, and sailing on hit a gentleman in the next carriage. This gentleman, almost blinded with egg-spatter and wrath, leaped out on our party, vowing vengeance and indeed meaning to drag Monsieur Verdier out of his seat and attack him. Vainly Mrs. Chart tried to explain to the outraged gentleman that the whole thing was an accident, that no annoyance had been intended to him, and that she was quite sure Monsieur Verdier was extremely sorry. Things really were looking very unpleasant when a gentleman from the carriage on the other side got out and joined the fray. He was middle-aged, large, important-looking, and he immediately exercised a steadying influence. Presently he led the angry gentleman round to the back of the brake, where Mr. Dupont's second man, always useful, cleaned him down. Then the rescuer, this stranger proving so suddenly a friend in need, led him away and talked to him. In ten minutes he brought him back altogether mollified and at peace. He smiled at his recent discomfiture, and I believe he and Monsieur Verdier shook hands. Making nothing of the aid he had given, the other gentleman returned to his own carriage, to resume his place beside a very beautiful lady, his wife.

They were Mr. and Mrs. Harland Peck of Chesham Place, and they became ever afterwards great friends of Mrs. Chart, who before long brought them to see us at Richmond. Mrs. Peck was an extraordinarily pretty



woman, and well known for her good looks. Mr. Peck, a very rich man, was more or less a patron of the arts, and had bought many modern pictures.

Monsieur Verdier was not daunted but rendered sombre by this little episode. His spirits, however, rose again on the homeward journey and were soon as high as ever. Fred Leslie, sitting opposite, made merry with him. When Verdier began to sing the *Marseillaise* Leslie pulled his hat down upon his brows, folded his arms, and frowned defiantly. The song ending, he called upon the Frenchman to sing God Save the King. I think that after the loyal anthem Leslie sang the Carmagnole, and next they went back to the *Marseillaise*. Madame as well as Monsieur Verdier now sang and perhaps one or two others joined in, with Leslie's beautiful clear voice leading.

The second man on the box looked round at us and grinned. Then, stooping, he fished out a coaching horn. On this orthodox yard of tin he blew some splendid loud tootlings. The horses pricked their ears and broke from a trot to a lively canter. People stared at us as we swept down the road and passed in full song.

The unlikely thing had happened. We were drawing attention. We were distinctly noticeable.

During the performance that evening our wonderful Nellie Farren enraptured us by making allusions in gags to the happy day. Immediately after the fall of the curtain Fred Leslie, in his dressing-room, showed us something that had just been brought up to him from the stage door. It was a present consisting of a locket in the shape of a heart and a thin silver string, together with a letter, sent to him by a quite young girl. "I think you are perfect," she wrote, "and I want you to have my silver heart. Please don't laugh at me. I know it is not very valuable. But it is the best thing I have, and I want you to have it. With love from Mabel."

"Laugh at her!" said Leslie, really touched. "Not likely. I shall always keep it."

This guileless offering from his young admirer was, I



suppose, the equivalent of the "fan mail" of a film star to-day. Compared with that possessed by such a person the fame of a stage actor even as charming as Leslie was narrowly restricted. His admirers were to be counted by hundreds instead of hundreds of thousands, and to the end he remained as thus considered so little known. Indeed no people had been well known in the tremendous modern sense till the advent of the film and broadcasting. At the highest point, as the instance that immediately occurs to me, there stands Charlie Chaplin, literally known to all the world. Charlie Chaplin is far better known than was Napoleon at any period of his career. For whole countries, vast tracts of the earth's surface, had never even heard of Napoleon, whereas there is not a spot on the planet in which Charlie has not become a familiar figure.



## BYGONE RICHMOND

**I** TAKE a last look back at the Richmond of my early youth.

It was truly a charming place, with characteristics and traditions that made it different from all the other districts that lay round London. Its natural beauties, the park, the river, the view of the valley from the hill delighted modern visitors, while the old palace, the green, the deer park, spoke of bygone grandeur. During two centuries and more it had been a favourite place of residence for rich and important Londoners. There were a large number of solid old houses, built at the same time as Lichfield House, at the end of Queen Anne's reign or beginning of George the First's, standing in walled gardens, and often surrounded with great trees. There were still older and more picturesque houses of lesser size crowded together along the river's bank, beneath the rise of the hill. Then it had quite a society of its own among the dwellers in a secondary type of house built at the opening of the Victorian era. These were occupied by retired soldiers and sailors, people of the Civil Services, and perhaps a few members of the Bar. They gave dinner parties among themselves, had music too, and probably played round games of cards. They prided themselves on being gentlefolk, and rigorously excluded other residents who, probably much better off than themselves, were tainted by a close connection with trade or commerce. They looked down on those that they considered socially beneath them, but in no way attempted to curry favour or gain acquaintance with those who were obviously high above them—for in these days Richmond in some ways was amazingly aristocratic.



Foreign ambassadors hired rooms there or stayed at the Star and Garter Hotel. Ministers and ex-Ministers of the Crown took furnished houses in which to pass the summer months on Richmond Hill. Three English dukes lived there or near by. Then on its fringe there were many of the exiled French princes. The Comte de Paris lived at Orleans House on the other side of the Thames. Another prince was at York House. The Duc de Nemours was near by—I think perhaps at Bushey Park. Without there being anything in the nature of a Court, it was a rendezvous for all those families. They were entirely unobtrusive, and the ordinary inhabitants of Richmond knew little about them. Our friend Monsieur Delpierre, while staying with us, usually went to dinner at Orleans House. Once he told us a little incident that I thought very significant. Host and guests were in the library before dinner, and the conversation turned on road making. Then a kindly elderly man, standing with his back to the fire and joining in the talk, said: "When I was King of Spain my great difficulty was getting metal for the roads." Monsieur Delpierre said his matter-of-fact way of saying this showed at once such dignity and such philosophy. He had nothing of a grudge about it.

The Orleans princess who became Queen Amélie of Portugal was living there among the others, and she returned to live in Richmond itself a good many years later, after the Portuguese revolution.

Our own royal family were represented by the old Duchess of Cambridge at Kew Green and the Duke and Duchess of Teck at the White Lodge—a comfortable Georgian house with a slightly German aspect in the middle of Richmond Park.

The Duke of Teck was a strikingly handsome man; a grand figure, dressed in black on a large bay horse, and with a groom behind him, when he rode in and out of the park gates. The Duchess of Teck (Princess Mary of England) presided happily over her family of three handsome sons and a very pretty daughter.

Princess Mary was one of the most amiable people



who ever lived. She was kind to my mother, and I think she wished to show regard to literary people. Then when Miss Rhoda Broughton came to live at Richmond she was kind to her. But Lord Athlone told me that the Princess was completely muddled by those two names, Miss Braddon and Miss Broughton. One day when Miss Broughton was at White Lodge the Princess said in the kindest way : " Do tell me about your sons. They must be nearly grown-up by now. Three of them, aren't there ? " Miss Broughton, as a prim and reserved spinster, was considerably upset by this. She remained taken aback and speechless. But the conversation passed on, and no explanations were made.

I said that people liked the drive to Richmond. It was just a convenient distance, far enough for horses, but not too far. The roads of course seemed quite empty if one compared these with their condition at the present time. And for a good part of the journey the surroundings were very pleasant, more especially in the spring. At that season, Barnes Common with yellow gorse all ablaze and the thick white may looking like snow on the hawthorns was succeeded through Mortlake and Sheen by endless fruit orchards full of pink and white blossom of apple and pear trees, and with long rows of yellow daffodils nodding their graceful heads beneath the fruit trees.

People came to us every Sunday in the summer.

Kindly ghosts, they rise to remind me, the gathered army of our Sunday visitors, and I see them again walking up and down the garden, or sitting on the terrace.

Here are but a few of the familiar names :

Genevieve Ward. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal. Sir Squire Bancroft. Lady Bancroft, who, with Alfred Capper, the thought reader, once performed a miraculous and successful pin hunt down half the length of the garden. Arthur Goddard, the before-mentioned Editor of *Society*. Johnson, London representative of the Paris *Figaro*. Mademoiselle de Castellan, the clever violinist. Miss



Elizabeth Philp, singer and composer. Isidore de Lara, the musician, singing to us after dinner in a strange dreamy style that was supposed to exercise a baleful power over the emotions of young ladies. George Grossmith (the elder), who gave us some of his attractive sketches at the piano. Pettitt and Merritt, who wrote melodrama for Drury Lane and other theatres in collaboration. Once or twice Sir Augustus Harris. Joseph Knight, dramatic critic. Wilson Barrett too. Sutherland Edwards, Cordy Jefferson, Palgrave Simpson—all of them well-known writers of the period. Percy Fitzgerald, essayist ; Fitzgerald Molloy, historian. Wybert Rousby, the tragedian, and his beautiful wife. Mr. Florence, an American comedian. Creswick, an older tragedian. W. P. Frith with his wife and family, including Walter the playwright and three or more pretty and amusing daughters. The Miss Friths delighted us by a satirical turn of humour that went rather incongruously with a very distinct outspokenness. Alice Frith, the eldest of them, became the wife of Sir George Hastings, who made her acquaintance when under our roof. He often speaks of these now far-off days. Ellis Hume-Williams, a thin elegant youth who played the piano beautifully and acted with great art in charades. Justin McCarthy and his daughter. Sir Charles Wyndham, and his namesakes Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wyndham, whose agreeable and nice-looking daughter Alice was marrying my brother Jack. The Robert Wyndhams had been proprietors of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh. Then both of them for many years acted there. Mr. Wyndham was one of those wonderful people who last for ever. He was riding in Hyde Park and looking like a boy till he was over eighty years of age. Mrs. Wyndham was a tremendous character. They lived in Sloane Street, and she used to make her family laugh at her by her affection for a modest little shop in the Brompton Road. She said she could get anything there, or if it wasn't in stock Mr. Harrod would take infinite pains to get it for her. "Yes," she would say, "Mr. Harrod's may



not be very large and grand, but it is the best shop in London."

Kind friendly ghosts—only names now—names forgotten by so many, unheard of by so many more.

Still another of our frequenters, Mr. Charles Braham, came almost every Sunday. Handsome, grandly dressed, full of *bonhomie*, he was a son of Braham the famous tenor, and himself possessed a fine voluminous baritone voice. He used to sing the "Death of Nelson" for us in noble style. He had a brother, Ward Braham, and a sister who was that commanding figure of the social world, Lady Waldegrave. She owned among varied belongings Strawberry Hill, the strange erection summoned to existence by the fancy of Horace Walpole and used by him as a residence. Lady Waldegrave on one or more occasions gave a Sunday garden party for her brother's young friends. Mr. Braham took a drove over there, including all of us, and we ranged at will about the beautifully kept grounds and were personally conducted through the rooms of the house. I remember that, far from wanting to echo the mockery of Walpole's contemporaries, I very much admired the queer rambling plan of the house and also the varied decoration of the rooms. Some of these with brocaded walls, Chinese ceilings, mirrors, crystals, seemed to me like the Brighton Pavilion, and I thought no worse of them for that.

In later life I had known and liked Lady Strachie for some time before I made the discovery that she was a daughter of Charles Braham. She speaks of him always with tenderness.

Naturally some visitors appeared on week-days as well as the gathering on Sunday. Two week-day visitors of this time come strongly to mind. One of them honoured us on one or two occasions. The other was fairly often at our house.

This was George Augustus Sala, an old friend of my father's and a staunch contributor to his magazines and periodicals. I spoke just now of the individual character shown by men and women in my youth, and I really think





MRS. W. B. MAXWELL







that this was especially true of authors and journalists. They were not like other people ; and they were not like one another. They were colourful, often striking of aspect, not infrequently eccentric. In these later days authors have become tamely similar, easily mistaken for doctors, stockbrokers, even gentlemen at large. Sala was a good instance of a past régime.

Let me try to describe this famous chieftain of the old gang, author and journalist combined, telling what I noted myself and much more that I heard about him. George Augustus Sala had won for himself renown and praise all over the English-speaking world for his erudite and yet humorous articles and essays. His knowledge of out-of-the-way subjects was colossal, and he wove his queer lore into a sort of running commentary on London life. A book by him, entitled *Twice Round the Clock*, had immense circulation and was admired and repeatedly cited by the most respected literary judges—including Charles Dickens and Thackeray. In sum it was generally said that rare thought, graceful comment, sheer wit made a fountain of delight that bubbled continuously from Sala's page.

But it was in journalism that he stood supreme. He belonged to the *Daily Telegraph*, and that great organ set the highest possible value on his collaboration. Sometimes he acted as foreign correspondent. Then all the illustrated papers had pictures of him dressed for the part. "G. A. S. on the Boulevards. . . . G. A. S. leaving for Vienna—for New York—for Russia." I think there was a rumour that he went to have a peep at the siege of Plevna, and I know that we had a photograph, given by himself, in which he and another correspondent were displayed as muffled in furs and seated on a sledge. He was soon home again and once more gladdening metropolitan breakfast tables with his morning sparkle.

Now for the man. Black-haired, rubicund, with one queer damaged eye (not wall-eye, nor squint, and yet like both), he had a manner that was a blend of fierceness and geniality. In the daytime he wore a white waistcoat



and a scarlet tie. Possibly the tie was intended to tone down the redness of his cheeks. While in a good humour and laying himself out to please he was a marvellously inspiring companion. His conversation was really brilliant, and I know my mother said of him that he talked much better than he wrote. Unfortunately he was quarrelsome ; nor, when he quarrelled with anybody, did the angry feeling pass quickly from him. He would keep a quarrel alive for a very long time. It was so in his quarrel with Bret Harte. What had started it I don't know, but it was spoken of as being still in full swing—only on Sala's part, I should add. Bret Harte made very little of it, and only smiled when Sala did a most preposterous thing in regard to it.

Sala and Mrs. Sala (his first wife) went to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Frith, and, on their arrival, found Bret Harte there. But there were many other people already in the room. It was a large party, and therefore it would have been quite easy for Sala unobtrusively to avoid his enemy. But that would not do for Sala. He said in a tremendous voice : " I can't sit at meat with that man." Then, taking Mrs. Sala under his arm, so to speak, he marched out of Mrs. Frith's drawing-room. I can recall considerable discussion of this episode. All seemed to agree that Sala had behaved badly.

Somebody remonstrated with Sala, and he started a quarrel with the remonstrator. A little later he quarrelled with his publisher, and on this my father interposed, taking the privilege of an old friend and arguing with Sala—saying he had forgotten past obligations, and that he really must drop the quarrel with the publisher. Instead of doing so, Sala quarrelled with my father.

His second wife had a gradually calming effect on his temper and exercised a very good influence over him in other ways. Amiable, sprightly, efficient, she met with a general welcome. She was a sister-in-law of Mrs.



Arthur Stannard, who wrote, under the pen-name of John Strange Winter, many popular novels about life in the Army.

That other week-day visitor was Lord Lytton.

The second Lord Lytton was a worthy successor to his father, the great Bulwer Lytton. Writing under the name of Owen Meredith he had made a big reputation as a poet. We were excited on hearing that we might see him.

In fact we were brought up in the Lytton tradition, and from early days taught by my mother to admire and delight in his splendid books—*The Caxtons*, *What Will he do With It?*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, as well as those with a supernatural strain, *Zanoni* and *The Strange Story*. I doubt if anybody nowadays understands the very high position in the world of letters that was held by Bulwer Lytton. Without question he was for many years the head of the literary profession. Dickens and Thackeray were acknowledged as greater writers, probably George Eliot too, but he had a status and prestige that nobody else could vie with. He was a man of ancient family, an aristocrat, wealthy, living in splendour, as it appeared to the outer world, at his house at Knebworth. Still further, he was a statesman, and had occupied important government offices. His speeches in the House of Lords carried weight. One thought of him with a respect that was not really snobbish, as filling leisure hours at a library desk in a fine room by writing those noble works.

Another big figure, a Prime Minister, no less a person than Lord Beaconsfield, had something of the same dual consideration that was given to statesmanship combined with authorship. But he never rivalled Lord Lytton. At the best his literary reputation had something of newness and tawdriness attached to it. And, let me add, that a measure of Lytton's power was the variety of forms in which his writing excelled; as well as a novelist he was an essayist; and as a playwright his success was of



the largest possible scope. His *Lady of Lyons* held the stage for decades. That amazingly good comedy *Money* is revived even to this day. No dramatic piece of the kind has ever equalled *Money* in the number of good parts that it offers for presentation. For this reason it has been brought out again and again for star performances, when many of the principal actors and actresses are gathered together. As in everything else, he dealt grandly with the business arrangements for these plays. I wish I had within reach MacCready's *Life*, because it contains one or two of Lytton's letters to him in regard to a production. (I can't trust my memory here, but I believe he kindly offered MacCready acting rights as a free gift.)

When my mother published her first books Bulwer Lytton wrote to her with the most generous praise, and offered her his friendship. Needless to say that my mother was grateful and delighted. He used to write long letters of kindly criticism to her on the appearance of each new novel. These letters were of great value to her, and she acted on the advice they contained. For her part she used to write to Lord Lytton expressing her delight in his new novels, but he turned all compliments lightly away, although obviously pleased by them, and offering thanks for them. I remember how in one such reply he said very simply, "I am so glad that you like my poor *Strange Story*." (And I think he went on, "It will need kind friends to defend it.")

After his death the second Lord Lytton wrote to my mother saying that he hoped this family friendship might be continued. Naturally my mother thought that this was very charming of him. He used to send her his poems on publication. When he in turn passed away, his widow, Edith, Lady Lytton, continued to be a friend. Till my mother's death she used to send her long letters, describing her life and service with Queen Victoria.

Lady Lytton died only this year at the age of ninety-three. Her twin sister Lady Loch survives. Another



sister, Mrs. Earle, had gone many years previously. Mrs. Earle was famous for her gardening school and her books about gardens. She, too, was a friend of my mother's, and she used to come over to us from her place in Surrey.

On this occasion, when Lord Lytton came to luncheon, he had just concluded his Viceroyalty of India, and was soon to go to Paris as our Ambassador.

Handsome and refined, with the strong yet delicate Lytton face that has now been transmitted to two more generations, he had a marvellously attractive presence. Old-fashioned in his personal manner and his punctilious courtesy, he was in other respects very modern. For instance, as we had heard, he liked to start his cigarette at dinner or luncheon long before the meal ended. He was pressed to do so by my parents, but he would not because my mother did not smoke. He had a trick of speech too that in modern times has become usual but was startling then as an innovation. This was the employment of big portentous words for small or unimportant things. Thus in this exaggerated way he said that a certain book was "devastatingly stupid", and that he "worshipped" clog-dancing.

After luncheon when my mother asked him if he would care to hear Mademoiselle Castellan play her violin he said: "I should adore it."

He spoke of Ouida gently and without a hint of complaint, although I believe she had bothered him dreadfully with a queer reverential worship that exacted demands for his time and attention. Oscar Wilde said Ouida loved Lord Lytton with a love that made his life a burden.

He wrote to my mother often, and I give here a letter written from Paris, at a time when, I think, he must have been First Secretary of Legation there. This of course was long before the date of which I have been speaking. The reference to a play concerns my mother's blank verse play of *Griselda* produced by the Rousbys at the Princess's Theatre.



“ PARIS,

12 Decr., 1873.

“ MY DEAR MRS. MAXWELL,

“ In beginning this letter I feel like Virgil's Ghost ‘ Chi per lungo silenzio pareo fioco ’—if not faint voiced at least faint hearted from the doubt whether my long silence can ever be forgiven by the kind writer of that pleasant and interesting letter from Richmond of which I dare not record the date. Honesco referens !—But since you also own to personal experience of those dismal difficulties in the way of letter writing which are incidental to a life of constant occupation, taking the form of constant interruption, I venture to hope for pardon. I have been living in one incessant rotatory storm of social and official duties and alas also of those tormentors far more troublesome than duties which are quite erroneously called pleasures. Could I have extricated my arms and legs for forty-eight hours from this spider's web, in which I have been buzzing and fidgeting to no purpose, I should certainly have flitted across the channel, perched myself on the balcony of a private box, and witnessed the representation of *Griselda*, on the success of which pray accept my cordial congratulations. All the newspapers I have seen are unanimous in their recognition of that success, and I hope you will feel disposed by it to develop further in the same direction the remarkably dramatic character of your genius. What do you think I am doing at this moment ? Negotiating with a Viennese Manager for the representation in German and Germany of that play of my father's, for the completion of which I owe to your kindness many valuable hints. If I find that the changes of scene do not unfit it for the French stage, I think I shall try to get it simultaneously acted at the Gymnase or Français here. But our English stage frightens me. About Sardou's new comedy now acting at the Vaudeville, of Uncle Sam, opinions here are much divided, but I certainly think



it extremely amusing and cleverly written. The acting is really wonderful. What is always pleasant in the acting one sees here even at the smaller theatres, is the good taste and apparent good breeding of the women actors ; they dress, talk, walk, and generally conduct themselves like gentlewomen and women of the world. In that respect our own actresses are hopeless. Dumas' new play I have not yet seen. The papers praise it much, but privately I don't hear it very highly spoken of. A series of letters by Merimée to an English lady friend whom he calls 'mon ami féminin' are just now making some sensation here ; I have been asked by Thiers, Remusal, Guizot and indeed all the world male and female here, who is the Lady ? I suppose you don't know ? I certainly do not. Dupont White declares it is that intolerable woman Mad<sup>e</sup>. Blase de Bury—which I am reluctant to believe ; as the *letters* at least are graceful, witty, and refined. The book is edited by Taine, and I recommend it to you, in case you ever find time to read anything—which alas I do *not*. The only book I have attempted to read since my return to Paris is Mills' Autobiography, and I am still crawling over it. My impressions of it are very painful ones. The wonder is that the defunct Philosopher did not emerge from his father's educational cucumber frame a hydrocephalous idiot.

" You will have seen by the papers that Bazaine is condemned. Mad<sup>e</sup>. MacMahon told me a few days ago that her husband the President intends to gracier him. But tho' the President can remit the penalty of death I don't think he can remit what French soldiers consider a worse penalty—that of military degradation, and all the world here is of opinion that the miserable man is bound to blow out his brains or whatever substitute for brains there may be in his head. Lachand's pleading was far too much in the Old Bailey style—or at least the French equivalent of that style—too oratorical, phraseological, and emotional. It certainly did not help the cause of



his unfortunate client. But nothing could have helped it.

“Guizot was offered the Embassy to London and refused it—and the Duc de Bernaise who has now taken it has certainly every qualification for popularity—a great name, a large fortune, and a charming wife.

“Adieu, dear Mrs. Maxwell. With kind regards to your husband, pray believe me your repentant and abashed correspondent

“LYTTON.”



## VII

### A PLEASANT WORLD

IT was a pleasant world into which to step as a young man of twenty. Perhaps its most striking difference from the world of to-day was its spaciousness. Throughout it one had elbow room—one was never crowded. What we called a crowd then would seem almost emptiness to-day. As an instance one might cite the condition of the most thronged streets. No block ever occurred in the roadway. The wheeled traffic rolled on smoothly, and if for a few moments hindered, could flow away round corners into other streets. The pavements were so little encumbered that one could recognise one's friends approaching when they were a hundred and fifty yards away. Nowadays, of course, one is not aware of them in places like Bond Street or Piccadilly until they surge up close upon one from the surrounding multitude. Just as there was no pressure, there was no hurry. One felt no necessity to look ahead and make arrangements beyond the passing day. One need not engage seats at the theatre. One could be sure of getting them when one arrived there. The most fashionable restaurants could give one a table any night without its being reserved. The notion of booking a place in a train was unheard of.

This less encumbered stage of life was occupied by most interesting actors and actresses. It was the epoch of the attractive ladies who were called professional beauties. The first of them was Mrs. Rousby the actress, known to everybody as "The beautiful Mrs. Rousby." Then came Mrs. Langtry, "The Jersey Lily," Mrs. Wheeler, Mrs. Cornwallis-West, and some others.

The story of the staggering effect made by the Lily



from Jersey when she burst upon London in all her youthful loveliness has been told a hundred times. I think that her only serious competitor was Mrs. Cornwallis-West, who with her shining brown hair and animated manner had a wonderful dragonfly brilliancy. Beautiful ladies of society included Lady Londonderry, Lady Annesley, Lady Warwick, the Duchess of Sutherland, Georgina Lady Dudley. The photographs of these great ladies, as well as the favourites of the theatre, could be bought in the shops. I remember a photograph of Lady Dudley that decorated our nursery mantelshelf.

If a playgoer, one had a rich choice. Irving had just produced *So-and-so* at the Lyceum. John Hollingshead at the Gaiety was "keeping the sacred lamp of burlesque alight." Hollingshead as well as being the author of many farces was a great phrase-maker. One was "Grandmotherly legislation"—an expression never used before he gave it off in a protest to the Press on the subject of licensing. The Bancrofts were going strong at the Haymarket, and the Kendals at the St. James's. John Hare, I think, had already severed his partnership with them and set up his own venture. Alexander, a young actor engaged at the Lyceum, was soon to blossom into Management, offering a long series of plays, nearly all of which were highly popular. Charles Wyndham and the Criterion gave one irresistible laughter. At the Court Theatre John Clayton, Arthur Cecil, and Mrs. John Wood were providing delightful entertainment with Pinero's farces.

Gilbert & Sullivan's Operas had already started. Everyone was whistling the music and reciting the verse of *Patience*.

The æsthetic movement with all its vagaries was in full swing. Hearty Philistines never tired of mocking at its pale votaries. Females of the cult were pictured as languidly aware of themselves and their affectations—wearing shapeless gowns of such dull tones as terra-cotta, saffron, and sage green. The males appeared as even more affected in pose—very effeminate too—and offering a shameless challenge to all decent and self-



respecting masculinity by having disgustingly long hair. At this period, I may add, long hair on men evoked a quite extraordinary passion of anger among those who liked to go close-cropped. "Long-haired fiddlers", as applied to many different callings, was a favourite expression.

The æsthetes, I think, probably owed much of their starting impetus to the pictures of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. But they could not openly turn to these artists for support. Now, however, they had found a combined high priest and champion in the person of Oscar Wilde.

For convenient amusement one might go to Hurlingham, but Ranelagh as a club was not yet. Epsom and Sandown Park had the only race meetings near London. Kempton, Hurst Park, and the Alexandra Palace did not exist as race-courses. But Ascot was then as now the great gathering place of Society. Hyde Park was a place of smiles and chatter. From seven to eight o'clock in the evening, while people continued to dine late, was the fashionable hour. One rode then in silk hat and black coat of course, and ranged up alongside the ladies in their carriages, which halted by the end of Rotten Row at Hyde Park Corner. But it was better fun, if still of a mild or solemn order, to keep on one's feet and wander where one pleased. A more lively treat was afforded by watching the cricket matches at Lord's and the Oval. These drew multitudinous spectators, although not to be compared in numbers with the vast concourses of to-day. W. G. Grace, the worthy hero of little boys, and many big boys too, was at the height of his form; and there was excitement about the Australian team. In a match at Lord's between England and Australia it was my immense privilege to see McDonnell, the Australian, drive two consecutive balls straight forward over the top of the pavilion and out of the ground.

The night life of London, as providing good places for the congregation of youth, was very restricted. Young men of all ranks used to frequent the Empire Theatre



promenade, the Continental Restaurant, the Bristol, and places of that sort. They could not go with their sisters, and their sisters' girl friends, to the well-conducted clubs and dancing haunts that are provided in such profusion nowadays. The only thing approaching to the modern night club was the basement of a house near the Alhambra Music Hall that had first the name of the Bohee, and then of the Gardenia. When this failed—or was closed by the police—the Corinthian Club, occupying the premises that now belong to the Sports Club, was inaugurated. But here too the shutters were soon put up. The only people of the other sex that one met at any of these assembly points were “ladies of easy virtue” as a delicately worded generation described them. Some of these were well known, with photographs in the shop windows, a special table reserved for them at the Continental, and a certain excitement aroused wherever they showed themselves. These leaders of the “profession” were known always as “Mrs. So-and-so”—“Mrs. Crossley, Mrs. Innes,” never as “Miss”. They did not want to be confounded with the Miss This or Miss That of the stage.

Thus, for a young man, companionship of respectable girls was impossible after dinner-time ; and it is amusing to consider what would have happened if he had gone to the house of a young lady who had charmed him, and had asked of her mother, exactly as he might do at the present time, if Enid would care to go out for the evening with him. Doubtless Enid's male relatives would have fallen upon him. The whole family would have clamoured in righteous wrath at his gross insolence in making such a suggestion. Those dreadfully hard rules of a bygone convention often came very cruelly between a young man and his love. He and she were rigorously kept at a distance from each other. It was difficult, even impossible, to get any further with a girl without taking a tremendous leap in the dark and proposing marriage. There was no telephone on which to linger in happy dallying chat. It was wrong to send her



flowers. He could do nothing but mutter feebly that he hoped he would see her again.

On her side the formula was "Won't you visit us?" But when the young man was there in the dear thing's home he was, as I have indicated, still kept remote from her. Mamma sat talking to him, and the girl perhaps made the tea, or, moving about the room occasionally gave him a shy glance. She might not even go downstairs with him when he departed. It was a heart-breaking affair.

Now the point of all this is that comparisons between then and now show everything to be in favour of to-day's régime.

Across the panorama of amusements there moved slowly and majestically some great figures. Mr. Gladstone might be seen in the open street. Lord Salisbury, seeming very big, with heavy shoulders and a massive head, used to walk through St. James's Park snapping his fingers and accompanied only by his thoughts. He had a nephew, a tall loose-jointed person of whom great things were expected, by name Arthur Balfour. His sons too had promising gifts, people said, but the doubt was whether any of them would ever settle down and do a piece of work. A young man who had already made a reputation was a brother of that clever cynical courtesy marquis, Lord Blandford. This young Lord Randolph Churchill would go far. He was audacious, amusing, brave as a lion, and sometimes burningly eloquent. Together with some other bright sparks he had founded a Fourth Party, an organisation that aroused considerable excitement.

Then there was Joseph Chamberlain, with an orchid in his buttonhole—young, foppish—characteristically dressed. Curiously, Henry Chaplin, physically a much larger man, often looked very like Joseph Chamberlain, so that people mistook those two one for the other. The resemblance possibly was merely caused by colouring—the same coloured hair and complexion. Mr. Chaplin also nearly always wore a flower in his coat.

Politics were altogether more exciting and people



were much more interested by them in that much less preoccupied period.

As guides into the pathways of social life I was fortunate in having two kind friends of the family.

The first of these was Richard Dighton. He was a regular attendant at first nights of plays and he took me to one or two of them. Also he introduced me to such well-known party-givers as Sir Bruce and Lady Seton at Durham House, Chelsea, and Mrs. Leo Schuster at Cannizaro, Wimbledon. Lady Seton's entertainments were in the evening—often a Sunday evening—and I seem to remember that there was supper in an illuminated garden at the back of the house. But perhaps I am muddling this notion with another illuminated garden that I soon knew. At the Setons' one met very interesting people, chiefly drawn from the artistic and literary world, with a sprinkle of actors and actresses.

Mrs. Schuster entertained in the afternoon, with garden parties on the very largest scale. The lovely grounds at Cannizaro were promenaded by the smart world and his wife. Carriages and horses filled the drive, and were parked on the Common before the gates—amongst them several four-in-hands. For some people still drove coaches in London, and out of it.

"Now," said Dighton, my mentor, "you will see a quantity of visiting cards on a table in the hall. Put your card there. Then they'll ask you again. . . . And if there is anybody taking the names, be sure to give yours. Then you may get into the newspapers."

My other guide was Oscar Wilde.

Wilde had first risen over the horizon of Lichfield House when he had come to an informal dance that occurred there several years before this time. He was already known—for winning the Newdigate Prize at Oxford, for writing much further poetry, and for launching his æsthetic campaign with some lectures on "The House Beautiful". But perhaps a stronger claim for recognition lay in his posing and affectation, and the



frequent public utterances of a colossal conceit. At our little dance the affectation was noticeable. In fact he drew all eyes, and criticisms that were anything but flattering followed him about the rooms. People told one another to look at a lackadaisical young fellow with long hair and pale face giving himself the airs and graces of the very devil. Oscar danced much with Lilian Major, a very pretty granddaughter of Judge Talfourd, author of the tragedy *Ion*. He pronounced, with a sort of fatuous sleepy contentment, that this young lady was a soothing gem. "Oh, yes, a soothing gem."

We chaffed Miss Major about her tranquillising qualities, and I believe that Wilde was permitted to visit her and her people in their fine old house at Sheen, but we saw him no more for several years. Exactly how he cast up again I do not know. I think, however, that my mother or my father must have met him at an afternoon party given by his mother. Lady Wilde lived at Chelsea in a very small house which she kept darkened with heavy curtains over the windows, and as she, unlike the house, was very large, ungainly too, one wondered how she got about and up and down stairs in the obscurity without an accident. Artificial light was turned on for parties and one saw Lady Wilde as really a vast terrifying person, with a strangely toned voice and a lace-clad head that nodded portentously.

The company consisted mostly of Irish poets, painters, writers, spoken of as famous by their compatriots, but with names that other people had never heard until Lady Wilde trotted them out. "Let me present you," she would say, "to Mr. Bryan Maguire, the poet of Killarney." Other guests were quite vague men and women, friends of the hostess in Dublin; perhaps now merely visiting London. And there were also a few followers of her late husband's profession, doctors of medicine. Her two sons, Willie and Oscar, were always at the parties, dutifully supporting her. They were unfailingly good sons to her.

No matter where encountered, Oscar Wilde now reappeared at Lichfield House. He had married and was



the father of two children. He brought Constance, his gentle affectionate wife, with him. My mother, my father, all of us, liked him, and soon we grew really fond of him. Thus he promptly became a friend of the house. During the next two or three summers he made it a practice to come down to us quite early on Sunday afternoon, and stroll about the garden or sit on the terrace in company with my brother Gerald and myself, and a fluctuating number of our young friends. Sitting there, smoking innumerable cigarettes half through and then throwing them away, he would hold forth to us juveniles with unfailing zest for the next two hours or so. Then about tea-time my father and other elders joined us. And for the rest of the evening Oscar was absorbed by them.

We younger ones grudged his capture. We would have liked to keep him to ourselves. I wish I could anyhow convey his charm—the effervescent wit—his love of sheer fun—his immense desire for pleasure. The most simple of pleasures seemed to satisfy him. He had epicurean tastes. He was fond of delicate food, served to him in beautiful rooms, with a soft cushioned chair to sit on. Yet he could devour rough and ready fare even in the uncomfortable circumstances of an out-of-door picnic with equal appetite. It greatly pleased him to hear a good joke, but in default he would laugh heartily at a bad one. Again, we were charmed by his total difference from the Oscar Wilde of public repute. I remember that in regard to this he told us that of course he had never walked down Piccadilly with a lily in his hand. “Anyone could have done that,” he said in mock pride. “The great and difficult thing was what *I* achieved—to make the whole world believe that I had done it.” And he laughed. His laugh was explosive, joyous, spreading a contagion of mirth.

He had of course changed almost incredibly from the “soothing gem” period. It seemed that he had scarcely any affectation at all. He had a pose, but it bore no relation to the earlier one. His clothes, always new and in good condition, were perhaps suggestive of Regency



fashions. The coats had waists, and he wore some sort of big flowing cravat. His whole attitude, both physical and mental, appeared to have become much more virile. He carried himself well, erect, his shoulders back, and his fine head properly poised. He had good eyes, and one might describe him as almost handsome, but no more than that. The heaviness of the jowl, with a slight looseness of the lips, must have disqualified him in any beauty competition. Altogether he would have struck anybody as being a fine big man with an open kindly outlook.

Of course he said surprisingly witty things. He could not help saying them. But I kept no records. I had not the Boswell flair, and they have all gone from me, or rather, they remain only as a memory of happy amusement. With us he relied largely on the use of gentle chaff, and a queer exaggeration, and sometimes by simple inversions.

Thus I remember how a year or two later I informed him that I had taken an idea he had told us, and written a short story with it. For a few moments his face clouded, then it cleared, and he spoke with a mixture of approval and reproach. "Stealing my story was the act of a gentleman, but not telling me you had stolen it was to ignore the claims of friendship." And again a cloud descended, and he became really serious. "You mustn't take a story that I told you of a man and a picture. No, absolutely, I want that for myself. I fully mean to write it, and I should be terribly upset if I were forestalled."

I promised, of course, to leave the man and his picture alone. It was, as some of my readers may guess, the story concerning the picture of Dorian Gray. But still several further years elapsed before Wilde took up the theme and wrote his book.

My brother Gerald was already a person of great knowledge and intellectual power, and Wilde used to pretend that he was overcome by his worldly experiences. I remember, too, that we habitually had with us a boy of eighteen or nineteencalled Ian, a good player of games,



but otherwise completely stupid. But Wilde pretended that he was brilliantly clever. He would call for silence because Ian was going to enlighten us. Ian, overcome with shyness, in the respectful cessation of voices, hummed and ha'd, and then made one of his amazingly trite remarks. On this Oscar professed himself in an ecstasy of satisfaction.

With us and with the elders he had always an unruffled temper. All through supper and afterwards his conversation became more and more polished, and with a higher and higher degree of wit in it. Once when he was talking in this splendid and urbane style someone roughly broke in. "That shows what a fat lot ye know about it." Oscar, at this naïve interruption, burst into delighted laughter, and said: "You are impossible, George!"

That George was George Stoker, soon to become a very successful throat specialist, brother to Bram Stoker of the Lyceum Theatre. They were both Irish, and whether purposely or inadvertently they always seemed to retain their strong Irish accent.

Wilde introduced me to André Raffalovich. He had a big well-planned flat at the corner of Kensington Gore in Albert Hall Mansions. The first time I went there was for luncheon, and beyond Wilde and myself the only other guest was Walter Pater. It was a lucky chance at my tender age to be in such an interesting trio. Our host, Raffalovich, was very clever—a poet—a young man with more than enough money to indulge his fastidious tastes; and although Russian by origin, much more French in the liveliness of his temperament. He had been brought up in Paris, and the rest of his family were living there.

I remember that he was particularly amusing in speaking of family relationships and the burden they may become, unless one has the courage to shake them a little loose. Wilde was brilliant as usual, and Pater, talking very solemnly, was no doubt illuminating.

To my shame I must confess I was such a Philistine that I had never read a line of his writing. And as



perhaps a worse confession I may add that when I did read it I could not really taste it, and to this day I cannot understand why critics speak with such rapturous praise of his style. I remember him as a sombre black and white person, with black hair, a white face, and a black moustache. He was not perhaps an ugly man, but unattractive and very distinctly corpse-like. I think that he had a sister, and that I used to meet her at Raffalovich's, but concerning her my memory may be playing me false. At this period men of that type nearly always had an unmarried sister with whom they lived.

Raffalovich gave evening parties that began very late in order that his stage friends might come straight from their theatres to attend them. These gatherings were great fun. At them I met and made friends with all sorts of more or less prominent people. Among them I remember very clearly Corney Grain, Arthur Cecil, Comyns Carr, Claude and "Scrobby" Ponsonby, and Walter Frith, barrister, playwright, full of knowledge and mordantly witty. Violet Hunt I remember with equal clearness. She was clever, bright, with a very sharp-edged tongue that she never used really unkindly. She has remained always the same Violet Hunt, sustained throughout all the adventures of her life by this natural kindness and philosophical humour. She can speak amusingly of any misfortune. Another I remember was Clifford Harrison, a good-looking and impressive sort of man. He was having a great vogue for his recitations, to which he added a piano accompaniment. At Raffalovich's I saw and made the acquaintance of Mrs. Jopling. She was handsome, and greatly talented as a painter. Quite recently Millais had painted her portrait.

It was at Raffalovich's too that I became acquainted with Ford Madox Hueffer—now Ford. But it may have been at a much later date. Ford Madox was a very pleasant companion, extraordinarily well-read, as well as so brilliantly clever. One might say that he was almost too clever and versatile. Versatility, as Hamilton Aidé presently told me, is a most dangerous attribute



in the arts. At the time I speak of another habitué was Oswald Crawford—who had been our Minister in Portugal—with his wife, a sister of Sir Clare Ford, our Ambassador at Constantinople. These two were already friends of my people.

I think it must have been at André Raffalovich's that I first met George Moore. Everything about Moore seemed to droop, his hair, his moustache, his necktie, his hands. His hair was of a queer yellowish tint, and his face pallid and dull in texture. So it would be scarcely an exaggeration to say that he did not look quite human, but rather the effigy of a man made out of dough and barley sugar. He appeared to my wondering eyes as unmitigatedly awful. It was some years before I read his novel *Esther Waters*. Then abruptly and for ever my opinions concerning him were changed. Henceforth I thought of him as the author of that truly fine work. I looked at him when we met with grateful admiration. Never again could I see him as being at all like that which he had first seemed to me. I loved *The Lake*, and some of his other work, but could not follow him comfortably through the mazes of *Hail and Farewell*, or the unexpected vagaries of *Brook Keriths*.

During this agreeable year people were very kind to me, as they always are to any young man who is decently responsive.

I don't know how I came to know Hamilton Aidé, but I think it was through New Forest friends who were connections of his. At once he was extraordinarily amiable to me. His friendship lasted unabated for many many years, indeed until his death. Aidé was of great prominence in his own world, which was a large one. A man of good family, he was known to everyone in good society, and very highly esteemed by dowager peeresses who made a little court for him. Immensely cultivated, Aidé seemed to possess all the talents. He painted pictures, he composed music, he wrote novels, plays, and short stories. One of his short stories (I think called *The Sisters of Milan*) had been acclaimed as excellent by Charles Dickens. Aidé himself thought that his writing



showed his best performance, although he took great pleasure in the exercise of his other gifts. Making that remark about versatility, he told me that he much regretted that he had not steadily attempted to master one thing instead of becoming a Jack-of-all-Trades. He had a much frequented flat in Queen Anne's Mansions, and a really charming house in the midst of a wood at Ascot. He shared this with cousins, Colonel and Mrs. Collier, and all three were of the same hospitable mind, cheerfully entertaining small house parties.

Among my fellow guests when I went to stay there were Dorothy Tennant and Henry James. Miss Tennant lived with her mother in Richmond Terrace, and was liked for herself and admired for her fine tall figure and good-looking face, and also for her skill as an artist. Beyond this, Miss Dorothy was altogether charming, by reason of her love of fun and power of evoking it.

Henry James, a rather short squarely-built man with a close-cut beard, an alert carriage, quick-moving eyes, and a benevolent smile, displayed a most engaging gaiety and lightheartedness. We three together played a nonsense game, taught us by Dorothy, and as we walked laughing over the heath rehearsed a ridiculous triangular conversation that we were to let loose at dinner that evening. He was thus strangely unlike the James of later life—that heavy personage of slow gesture and abstruse utterances, with the mantle of solemnity continuously draped about his pontifical shoulders.

I loved his early books—*Daisy Miller*, and one or two more. But these were as different from his subsequent works as was the middle-aged man from the old one. The diffuse and intricate method that gradually he adopted was, as all the world knows, very much admired by many people. In this connection it has always seemed to me so truly amazing that of those two brothers, Henry, the novelist, writing of the comparatively simple and unimportant things, so tortured and complicated his medium of communication as to be often very difficult of comprehension, whereas William, the philosopher and psychologist, dealing with most recondite and subtle



matters, wrote so neatly and lucidly that everybody could understand him.

Dorothy Tennant before long married H. M. Stanley, the famous explorer. And I remember that it was said maliciously that she had always been a lion hunter, and now she had caught the king of beasts. This was of course mere chaff with no basis in fact. Theirs, I believe, was a very happy marriage. He proved a faithful, affectionate husband, and she a loving and devoted wife.

As an instance of that most difficult style that James employed in his later years, my mother when we were at Bexhill asked him to come over from Rye to luncheon. His letter in reply had only one sentence, and that not yet completed, on its closely written first page. When we had read all down the front page and overleaf to the end of the letter we did not know whether he was coming to lunch or not.

But here I have digressed badly.

My son Henry tells me in regard to this period that he often reads with surprise of young men forming friendships with their elders and betters. He says he doubts if anything proportionate could be achieved by a young man in these hectic and competitive days. On one side there would be lack of inclination, on the other want of time.

I certainly cultivated elderly people, perhaps mindful of Bulwer Lytton's dictum that "In youth one should consort with people older than oneself and in age with people younger," and I cannot remember that I ever suffered any serious repulse.

Among friendly old boys that I had collected were some Irish members of Parliament, including Mr. Dawson, the Lord Mayor of Dublin. He and another member called Crawford, and I think one or two more, came down to Lichfield House, and of Mr. Dawson especially I saw a good deal. He was a small man, very Irish, full of kindness, but excitable, and almost frantic when his chivalrous indignation had been aroused. Recently, during some debate on a Bill that seemed to



press heavily on the welfare of women, he had one of his fits of wrath, and made the House laugh by declaring that if any man or any army of men attempted to injure Mrs. Dawson they would only get at her across his dead body.

He wanted me to stand for an Irish constituency, and one night when he had me to dinner at the House, he spoke of his invitation to the two or three other members who made up the party. When I mentioned that I was not yet of age—that I should not be of age for another year—he said this would do nicely, and nobody would ask my age in any event. Then I said I had no qualifications for the honour, and he said Oh, yes. They would show me off as a very rich youth of a noble English family, who had broken away from all traditions because convinced of the justice of Home Rule. To this I had to say that I was neither noble nor rich.

“Not rich!” cried Dawson. “Why, the evidence of the costly cigarette case ye brought out of your pocket just now is sufficient contradiction.”

The case was a very ordinary one, made of silver, and not really at all suggestive of opulence.

But Mr. Dawson added to his argument that a poor young man would keep his cigarettes in a screw of paper, and have no cigarette case at all.

“We must present ye to Mr. Parnell,” he concluded.

Before our dinner was quite finished, Mr. Parnell stood by the table and gravely accepted the presentation.

Dark, tall, tremendously impressive, he stood there for some minutes in complete silence while the others talked. Of him Mr. Winston Churchill has written recently “It is difficult, if not in some ways impossible, for the present generation to realise the impressive and formidable part played by Charles Stewart Parnell in the later decades of Queen Victoria’s reign.” Mr. Churchill says too that “an air of mystery and legend had hung about Parnell from his Cambridge days.” His authority over the Irish parliamentary party was absolute. He was their leader, above them, and high above them. As an indication of this remoteness one might notice that



he was never addressed by his followers otherwise than as Mr. Parnell. No one ever called him Parnell, much less Charles. Looking up at him I felt very sensible that he was a most powerful personality.

I believe he said, or implied (perhaps this was told me by Dawson) that it would cost very little, and that I should do all right. And I have little doubt that I should have been duly elected to the constituency allotted to me, as indeed would anybody else have been if nominated or supported by Mr. Parnell.

It was of course a tempting prospect—to swagger about in Ireland for a few weeks, and then return to London puffed up with vanity as an M.P. But I had to turn away from the inviting prospect. And finally, having tried to hold it back, I was forced to tell my kindly friends of the fatal objection to their plan. I was already a hardened Unionist, and through and through vigorously hostile to the project of Home Rule.

It was in this year I think that I went to the first of two or three quite entertaining Henley parties. These were given by Lord Londesborough, the local potentate of the New Forest. Their scene was a houseboat, named *The Ark*. We went down by train in reserved saloons, and then assembled for the long happy day on *The Ark*, from which, however, we could issue if we wished and take a little tour in punts or canoes or skiffs on the crowded river. But the company it was that so greatly delighted me. They included theatrical stars of both sexes, with the very prettiest of the actresses, together with a selected band of our host's innumerable friends, for the most part, like himself, of noble rank. I remember particularly Lord de Grey, distinguished as being one of the best shots, if not *the* best in England.

Lord Londesborough was a patron of the stage, and was reputed to have lost thirty thousand pounds in one production—*Babil and Bijou*, a musical spectacle. For some years he ran the Olympia Theatre, with Henry Neville, in legitimate drama. It was on *The Ark* that I consolidated my acquaintance with dear Mrs. John



Wood, the comedy actress, and Lionel Brough, the comedian.

The festivities I have named so far, with the exception of Mrs. Schuster's, were all tinged with bohemianism, if a very superior sort of Bohemia that perhaps should be merely called the artistic community. But occasionally I had glimpses of what was more particularly described as "Society" with a capital "S".

I was often with my mother at the house of Lord and Lady Ardilaun in Carlton House Terrace. Between the Ardilauns and my mother there was a very warm regard, and they were frequently with us at Richmond. Lady Ardilaun's evening parties were very grand, arranged in stately fashion, and yet with a lavish provision of supper for the guests in the never over-crowded supper-rooms. Lady Ardilaun, "Olive" by Christian name and olive of complexion, with dark smooth hair and rather dark eyes, tall, well made, was a fine figure, standing at the top of the staircase and receiving the "grands". People leaning over the balustrade of a gallery that crossed above the staircase watched them coming up, and heard their names announced. Big people—notable people—people of very high rank—foreign ambassadors and ministers—and a very few distinguished political and literary people—came slowly upward and ceremoniously greeted their hostess.

Concerning this staircase, with its graceful turn into two wings, there was a legend that it had been the original staircase of George the Fourth's Carlton House. But I think it was no more than a legend. Oscar Wilde took the staircase for his play *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and put his heroine in the position that belonged to Lady Ardilaun. Oscar, as an old friend, was always there, and those literary people to whom I have made reference I think comprised no more than Mr. Lecky, the historian, looking like a meek skinny overgrown nonconformist clergyman, Mr. Smalley, a stubby roughish sort of American, the English representative for several New York papers, and lastly George Moore, who



was a valued friend from Ireland. After years of these stately entertainments Lord Ardilaun fell ill, and on his death Lady Ardilaun sold the house.

Now, anticipating to the extent of a decade or two, I feel I must relate how I came back to the house and again attended evening parties there. Purely by chance, I believe, and not from any tie of relationship with its former owners, it had become the property of Mr. Benjamin Guinness, the eminent financier, and Mrs. Guinness, his attractive wife, a most charming kindly woman who was making it famous for its hospitalities. But these new evening parties formed an almost incredibly strong contrast with those of the past. Except when occasionally Mrs. Guinness gave a dance, her gatherings were of a delightfully informal character. One might say that she had really established a *salon* with widely opened doors. One might say too that she received all sorts and conditions of men. They assembled rather late after the opera and the theatres, and they stayed late too. Some of them had themselves been singing or acting. I remember as habitual visitors Miss Tallulah Bankhead, Mrs. Pat Campbell, Miss Catherine Nesbit. Young lawyers and even young Members of Parliament abounded. Often there were artists, but always of a very modern school ; all sorts of writers too, including at least on one occasion a writer who always declared that he hated being kept out of bed late at night—namely, Arnold Bennett. Sometimes there was a dinner party before the reception, and I remember seeing George Moore at dinner there. Old now, but really little changed in aspect, he was privileged to dine in morning dress, as if he had been a Cabinet Minister, and he sat next to his hostess, and by her was cherished and made much of. It came into my mind that George Moore and I were like house cats who could not be got rid of. Time passed, the house changed hands, but there we were !

I have touched on their democratic character, but these parties of Mrs. Guinness had a queer streak of almost incongruous quality or grandness in them. This



was given by the frequent presence of members of the Royal Family, with all of whom Bridget Guinness was *persona gratissima*. Princess Christian came, the Duke of Connaught, and quite often those two very amiable ladies, Princess Helena Victoria and Princess Marie Louise. The Princess Helena is of course a wonderfully exhilarating companion, nearly always in good spirits, loving fun, and with a stock of good jokes and pleasantries that she imparts effectively. As I once told her, I had dined out for a fortnight on some anecdotes with which she had just provided me. Princess Marie Louise I met first when she was quite young. And I thought then how elegant and attractive she was, how unusually clever, indeed how highly gifted. I have thought so ever since, and my friendship for her has developed into an affection that does not change either. In public places she always says the right thing, and says it with unfailing gracefulness. On occasions she can rise to real eloquence. She used to come to our Authors Society dinners, and once or twice spoke at them. Gilbert Parker, the novelist, was much impressed, and he said to me: "She is a poet—absolutely a poet." I told her of his praise, and she said: "Am I a poet? But what is Gilbert Parker? Is he a poet? If not, he doesn't know whether I am, does he?"

Like the lady in the omnibus she always has her answer ready, and it is often a very amusing one.

One day Mrs. Guinness asked me to tea informally with Queen Mary, and in the letter of invitation she said that mine was one of seven names chosen by her Majesty from a list submitted to her. Of course the extent and value of this compliment depended on the nature of the list. I liked to think that it was a very long and representative list. Of the six others who were similarly honoured I can remember Alfred Sutro and Sir Edwin Lutyens, but I cannot recall the remaining four. Then soon after this Mrs. Guinness asked me to meet the Queen of Spain in the same manner. The spell cast over me by the Queen of Spain almost recalled the fairy charm to which I had yielded a few years before. She really



was like a queen in a fairy tale. At this time, before the revolution, she was at the height of her beauty, and she had a quite adorable expression of face and a sweetly gentle manner. She told me a great deal about Spain, giving a full description of some very strange effects that had resulted from the incursion of Russian refugees after the War. She said they had influenced all the arts, but more especially music and painting. I asked her about Spanish writers, and she was very informative here also. But she spoke with great bitterness of Ibañez, the novelist, saying what pain he was then bringing to her family—I assume by publication of revolutionary views. His conduct, she said, was very ungrateful, because she had been particularly attentive to him. As an example of a nice author after this nasty one she told me that one winter when her mother, the Princess Beatrice, was staying with her at Madrid, Rudyard Kipling used often to come of an evening and read from his own works. It was a tremendous treat to them.

This ends my tale of Royalty. No further Queens will adorn my later pages.



## VIII

### OLD LADIES

I HAVE been thinking of old ladies.

Only a little before my time old ladies at the age of fifty-five put on caps and humbly sat at home by a corner of the fire as if they no longer had any place in the busy world. There was nothing of that in my adolescence. They remained active, vigorous, even ubiquitous, but they were old ladies, to be respected as such and not dealt with lightly. Then by the time I had grown up the status of old ladies had still further improved. They were important figures in society. They carried heavy weight and exercised real influence. Could it be that this enhancement of power and the extended distance from the shelf that they once used to go on had had its origin or source in an acknowledgment of the fact that the whole realm was now ruled by one of them? For Queen Victoria, already old and venerable, was about to celebrate her first Jubilee.

Be that as it may, at this period even quite young people bowed down before them. They sought their favour; they craved their protection. A word from them opened doors or closed doors. From a social point of view they could make you or break you.

Undoubtedly the most prominent of them was Lady Ailesbury—"Maria Marchioness", as all the world called her.

In the upper walks of society she went everywhere. No really grand party was complete without her. The first time that I saw her was at an evening party given by the first Lord Burnham at his new house in Grosvenor Square, and I was much impressed by her. Here, in the life, was Maria Marchioness, of whom I had heard



so much. She stood there, tall and straight, very *décolletée* too, with a mass of light-coloured hair, talking to the old Duke of Cambridge, to my mother, and one or two others, keeping them all together in the conversation. I stood at a respectful distance watching them till she moved off. She struck me as dictatorial, rather loud-voiced, with a manner that in a man might have been considered swaggering, but grand—oh, unquestionably grand. Presently she swept away.

Then I remembered how my mother had described seeing her a long time ago, in the gallery of a public exhibition. She had a little circle round her on that occasion, and when she began to move, breaking it up, someone tried to hinder her departure. "My good man," she said loudly and gaily, "I have forty people coming to dinner to-night. Don't you want me to be there to receive them?" And she went, sweeping through the gallery.

That was the way now in which she left Lord Burnham's party. I thought that it was what she did night after night with undiminished zeal, sweeping through the drawing-rooms of London, vouchsafing a smile or a nod here and there, and making the recipients of the favour glow with satisfaction.

One could not be quite nobody if Maria Marchioness troubled to notice one.

The next prominent old lady was Lady Dorothy Nevill. So to speak, she inherited Lady Ailesbury's position in the social world, but she was entirely different. Small, with a slender body and delicate face, she seemed too fragile for the rough and tumble of life. She dressed very prettily, but quaintly, so that she was unmistakable in external aspect. But outwardly or inwardly, she was truly charming, delightful to talk to, bright and witty, full of knowledge and understanding. Statesmen sought her company. Lord Beaconsfield had been a great friend. She lived in Charles Street, with a daughter, Meresia, who became almost as well known as herself, and two very pleasant sons. One was Ralph Nevill, who developed into a recognised wit. He helped



his mother when she began to write books, and later wrote very amusing books himself. His pen stopped and his hand grew cold much too soon. He was missed at the St. James's Club and the Beefsteak.

People used to say that Lady Dorothy entertained all London at the Charles Street house. But if this were true, it required a very long time for them to pass in and out of her hospitable rooms, for she never had many together. Moreover these small contingents were specially selected for qualities that somehow or other pleased their hostess.

She was famous for her Sunday luncheon parties, and really one met very interesting as well as very distinguished men and women at them. She was much attached to my mother, and extraordinarily kind to my wife and myself in having us to the Sunday feasts again and again. We loved going there. We all liked Lady Dorothy for herself as well as for her parties. She was a frequent visitor at Lichfield House, and always a truly welcome one.

Next as an outstanding figure comes Lady St. Helier. Lady St. Helier literally went everywhere, including public resorts as well as private houses, and she knew everybody—not merely those of high station, but quite simple toilers and moilers. First in Harley Street and then in Portland Place she was almost world-famous as a hostess. Of her one could say that she did really have the world and his wife at her house. She gave big dinner parties and luncheon parties, and quite possibly had breakfast parties, but I do not know this to be a fact. It was open house upstairs. Above the entertainment floors she had staying visitors, whom she called her "lodgers", and sometimes, when the evening guests were leaving, they could see one or two of the lodgers discreetly mounting the staircase towards their resting places. I remember thus seeing, amongst others, the kindly English prince who by the decrees of fate became later the Duke of Holstein. He was a regular lodger at the St. Helier establishment.

Celebrities of all kinds thronged to the Harley Street



drawing-rooms. Nor did Lady St. Helier wait for people to be excessively well known. She recognised talent and genius while their possessors were still poorly rewarded by the world, and not at all acclaimed by it. Indeed one might say that many a person's first intimation of approaching success was the discovery that Lady St. Helier knew all about him. She begged him to come and see her, she introduced him to those who might be useful to him. She made much of him. She put new heart into him.

I think she was the first London hostess of importance who sprinkled her gatherings with quite young people. And this perhaps was because she had two delightful daughters (subsequently Lady Middleton and Mrs. Henry Allhusen). They brought in their friends, who were of as varied a character as their mother's. The fresh bright faces of these young people lit up the assembly of the elders, and seemed a startling innovation—but not an undesirable one.

Another tremendous originality in Lady St. Helier's method of entertaining was her mixing up the people who might be described as enemies in public. She refused to admit that a sound old Tory must not be invited to meet a Radical of dangerously advanced views, or that one of the old-fashioned slating critics must not encounter the author or actress who had been his victim.

Lady St. Helier as a very old lady continued to be almost as active as ever, carrying on her public work with the London County Council, and in connection with other bodies, almost to the very last. Personally I think I never knew a woman so vigorous at a great age—unless it was her elder sister, Julia Lady Tweeddale, who outlived her, and seemed perhaps a shade more sprightly in her last days.

Three other old ladies, friends whom I truly loved, were Georgina Lady Dudley, the Duchess of St. Albans, and Mrs. George Edwardes (Julia Gwynne). But I never thought of them as old, and cannot now believe that they ever were.



Still another friend who carried youth into advanced age was Lady Bancroft.

In this connection I must not forget Mrs. Charles Skirrow, a friend of my parents. The wife of a Master in Chancery, she was a Mrs. Leo Hunter of the kindest and most amiable sort, but, so to speak, she was in a much smaller way of business than Lady St. Helier. She lived in one of those terraces to the north of the Bayswater Road—I think Sussex Terrace. And her entertainments were confined to dinners and luncheons. Mr. Skirrow was older than herself, and it was not good for him to sit up too late. She would therefore occasionally hustle off her guests at the end of the evening, plainly anxious to be rid of them because Mr. Skirrow was becoming sleepy. Sometimes he consented to go off quietly and unobtrusively ; then the party went on again as jollily as ever.

In her lion-hunting, Mrs. Skirrow collected some remarkably good specimens, but undoubtedly the finest head of the collection was Mr. Robert Browning. He was nearly always of the party, and, as well as being so proud of having him there, she was so joyous in showing him off, Mrs. Skirrow, as one could plainly see, had a genuine affection for him. She was watchful of his comfort, careful in giving instructions to her servants that he was to be looked after in every possible way. Of course when she had him next to her at the meal she could take care of him herself.

Mr. Browning liked to drink port wine with his dinner and nothing else—no sherry or champagne or any wine except the port. Needless to say his taste in the matter was well understood and provided for. When the rank of other male guests made it impossible for the kindly soul to have him beside her at dinner she would send him affectionate glances from time to time. Little swift noddings, or gentle grimaces, by which he might understand that he still occupied the first place in her mind, and was not for a moment forgotten. He smiled back at her, and nodded his handsome head.



But under these conditions one night she could not obtain the usual response from Mr. Browning. He sat there very solemn. If he nodded his head it was gloomily, and never a smile came back from him. This filled Mrs. Skirrow with solicitude, and made her very anxious before the dinner ended. What was wrong? Then, when the ladies were leaving the room, she spoke to him, with a hand upon his arm, expressing some hope that he had eaten his food with appetite.

"You had your port wine, of course?"

"No," said Mr. Browning solemnly, "I had no port wine."

"Oh, but how dreadful," cried Mrs. Skirrow, thrown into the utmost distress. "How could such a thing have happened! I can never forgive myself. But you will have some now?"

"No, thank you," said Mr. Browning.

It was too late.

Mrs. Skirrow almost wept. She repeated expressions of sorrow.

"Oh, pray," said Mr. Browning, "it does not matter in the least."

But of course it mattered most frightfully.

This little episode that I give here is really merely hearsay. My mother told me about it. Although I had the honour of knowing Mrs. Skirrow I was still too frivolous and silly to be invited to such assemblies. On the other hand, in her great amiability, she was amazingly lenient to my silliness. As an instance! Across the footlights I had become enslaved by the fascination of an American musical or light comedy actress by the name of Mademoiselle Lotta, who had come over to do a star season at a London theatre. I wanted naturally to tell Mademoiselle Lotta of my intense admiration, and of the joy her acting had given me. And I told good Mrs. Skirrow of my state. Did she by chance know Mademoiselle Lotta? She did. Could she contrive a meeting for me? She could, and she would. Mademoiselle Lotta in fact was coming to luncheon with her one day soon, and although Mrs. Skirrow's numbers



were made up, and she could not have me at the repast, I might come in afterwards and join the party upstairs. This I did. And Mrs. Skirrow immediately presented me to my enchantress, and, only a minute or two later, introduced Mr. Browning to her.

I had already in a blundering fashion told Mademoiselle Lotta what I was thinking about her. She received my homage very graciously. After all incense is incense, however clumsily thrown, and wreaths are wreaths, no matter with what humble roadside flowers they are made. In her turn she had begun to tell me why and how she had decided to gratify London with her presence, and she had just told me to sit by her on a sofa when Mr. Browning was brought in. She invited him to sit on the sofa too, and to put him at his ease said a word or two directly to him, although obviously engrossed by me. "Do sit down, Mr. Brown," she said. And, to my horror, I understood that she had not caught his name, and did not in the least know who he was. "Well, Mr. Brown," she went on, "I was telling Mr. Maxwell here what a fuss and a flurry it was for me when I pushed off from New York two months ago. Mr. Maxwell has never been in New York. But you may know it, Mr. Brown. If so——"

In great confusion I now attempted an intervention, wanting to say: "Forgive me, Mademoiselle Lotta, but you don't understand—this is Mr. Robert Browning, the great English poet." But he, detecting my intention, stopped me with a really wonderful smile and gesture. His face was full of good humour, of benevolence. He was quite happy. So we sat there, and to the end of quite a long conversation he continued to be Mr. Brown.

I am quite sure he enjoyed it.

Still one more personage. Old Lady Anna Chandos-Pole held a high and important position in serious and immaculately respectable society. A tall large woman, white-haired, pale-faced, moving very slowly and speaking very quietly, she was more than stately, majestic and slightly terrifying. She lived in dignified state at



Harrington House, which is situated about half-way up Kensington Palace Gardens on the right-hand side. It was built for her father, Lord Harrington, and although by no means to be classed as among the biggest houses in London, it had something quite palatial about its internal aspect. The reception rooms, all on the ground floor, were spacious, lofty, finely decorated, seeming to have been designed for entertaining in grand style.

And it was thus that Lady Anna entertained, for friends who were mostly people of rank or importance like herself, usually wealthy too as she was. But she did not mind having the representatives of other walks of life. No one could rightly accuse her of snobbishness. In my time her entertainments consisted of luncheon parties that in their pomp and formality already seemed to belong to an earlier régime. They occurred at 2 p.m. They had card-names upon the table. Champagne was offered from their beginning to their end.

Lady Anna had lived at Harrington House as a girl with her parents, then again as a married woman, and had seen three tall handsome daughters scatter from it. In her father's days numerous notable visitors came to it. Of these she had reminiscences that I found intensely interesting. She was always kind and gracious to me, and at once I formed the opinion, an opinion I never changed, that beneath the rather awe-inspiring manner and the slight suggestion of portentousness, I had come into touch with a naturally warm-hearted and benevolent nature. I had been made known to her by one of the daughters.

I remember an evening at the dawn of our acquaintance when I dined with her quite alone and she told me many wonderful things concerning the past, including a little incident that I thought really picturesque. We sat after dinner in the garden behind the house—it was a warm summer night—and out there the silence seemed amazing in its profundity. Kensington Gardens lying in front of us was an untrodden forest fast asleep. The



Bayswater Road and the Kensington Road to our left and our right respectively were as I mentioned equidistant and they might both have been closed for traffic, since not a sound came from either. Not a sound came from anywhere. If carriages or cabs passed behind us the intervening bulk of the house shut off the murmur of their wheels. The silence was far more complete than it would have been in the depths of the country. For in the country there are always night sounds to be heard—the occasional cry of a bird, the bark of a dog or a fox, the faint rattle and puffing of a far-off railway train. But I digress badly.

This was the little tale that struck me.

In Lady Anna's youth a visitor who often came to the house was Prince Louis Napoleon, nephew of the great Napoleon, and himself going to be Emperor of the French, but at that epoch an exile merely waiting on fate. One day as he arrived another man was leaving. They met in the hall, one putting a hat down on the marble table, the other picking up a hat, and they exchanged the vague civilities that two total strangers under the roof of a friend offer automatically—say a half-smile, a standing aside, a gesture meaning: "You first," a gesture meaning: "No, I beg."

Arrived in the drawing-room the Prince was asked if he had noticed the man who was going out, and he said yes, he had noticed him but did not know him. What about him?

They informed him then that it was Sir Hudson Lowe, the jailor of Napoleon at St. Helena.

Was not that a queer chance encounter?

Lady Anna told me something about King Edward that I also liked. He was a friend of her husband's, and, as Prince of Wales, came now and then to Harrington House, making himself very pleasant there. Lady Anna admired him greatly. And when he became King she thought, not unnaturally, that she would never see him again, beyond such glimpses as she might get at a Court, or a public ceremony. Why should she?—as she said. He had been her husband's friend—not really



hers. She had no possible claim upon him. It was scarcely probable that with all his onerous duties he would have time or thought for a dull old woman like herself, as she humbly said.

But this is exactly what King Edward had. To her surprise and delight, not long after he ascended the Throne, there came a message from Buckingham Palace, saying that the King would be glad to visit her between tea-time and dinner-time that day. He came, and sat chatting with her for nearly a couple of hours, hours that for her flew by all too swiftly, for he was so very amiable. She told me, touchingly as I thought, that after he had been there a few minutes she seemed to forget everything that could possibly interfere with the pleasure of the interview—her own age, her diffidence, her desire not to worry him. She forgot that he was King, she forgot who he was. She only knew that a charming, kindly man of the world was talking to her.



## MISTLETOE BOUGH

ON my twenty-first birthday my father with extreme generosity gave me an annual publication known as *The Mistletoe Bough*. This was the last of all the magazines retained by him, and he had grown weary of running it ; but, as he said, I ought to find its management an easy and interesting task, and I could start a Summer Annual as well. My mother edited it, contributing a short story to every issue. It was popular as was everything that had her name attached to it.

Its revenue depended largely on the advertising pages, and unfortunately they became increasingly difficult to fill. Then sales too began to fall. In these circumstances the profits became a lessening quantity. For a long time they were handsome, and more than enough to keep me in funds for the year. Then they declined sharply.

I think that half-measures were my downfall. The Annual, in regard to cover and contents, had an old-fashioned aspect. Except my mother's, the stories had often seemed to me out of date, and the illustrations were poor. I wanted to modernise it, and I think that I ought to have done this in the boldest manner, by discarding the existing cover and general style, and giving something completely new. Instead, I contented myself with improving the illustrations, and trying to get some better stories.

For instructional purposes my father had taken me round among the principal advertisers, applying for renewals. This was advertisement canvassing of an unusual kind, because these people were all glad to see my father, whereas they might have given anything



but a cordial welcome to an ordinary canvasser. It was more like the real thing when he told me to try for a new advertisement, and after an introduction left me to my own devices.

He also introduced me to people connected with publishing and production. The most important of these was the house of Simpkin, Marshall & Co., which belonged to the family of Miles, who were all friends of ours.

Simpkins placed the Annual on sale for us, distributed it, and put their imprint as Publishers. Next came the paper makers, with Messrs. Wrigley at their head. Wrigleys' was a large business, and it had for its manager Mr. Walford, a very clever and interesting man, who was the husband of Mrs. L. B. Walford, the novelist. The printers to whom I was made known by my father were Messrs. Ryders, and Messrs. Clowes & Son. He took me also to Messrs. Leighton, Son & Hodge, the binders, and Messrs. Evans, the engravers. (A younger Evans that I met then became the senior partner or proprietor of the business, and I am glad to say that I still meet him going strong on my favourite golf course.)

Messrs. Clowes became uninterruptedly the printers of my mother's books in their varied editions.

I found all these people, their offices, works, and warehouses, of immense interest. As I bustled in and out I felt very important. I felt that it was a grand thing to have occupation, steady employment, a purpose in life. Metaphorically I had put my hand to the plough, and of course I did not see the day when I might take the hand away and restore it to an undeserving idleness.

Since I understood the necessity of securing advertisements I set myself to their acquisition with energy. But in order to start easily, and, as it were, get a little practice, I went to see our old friend Baron de Ville, who had an office in Pall Mall, and invited him to advertise his champagne. It was a very well-known brand, as I think I said before, but I am a little shaky as to which of them it was. I will therefore give it an initial, "M".



The Baron, handsome, smooth, and smilingly courteous, welcomed me, and expressed a strong desire to further my wishes. But he said ordinary advertisements no longer gratified him, and he would much prefer that I should introduce something about his wine in a story. As, for instance, it might be said of the characters that "After their fatigue, they speedily refreshed themselves with a bottle of 'M' champagne." Or, one might say of a banquet that "'M's' popular champagne was served throughout it." I told him that I feared this would be impossible, and he said he could not comprehend why. What possible objection could there be to it? It might be done artistically. I would know how to instruct my authors. And for it he would be prepared to pay handsomely. To my regret I was obliged to stand firm, and I explained that among other difficulties this innovation would bring all my other advertisers upon me. They would wish the story to go on by saying that: "In the morning after the banquet everybody took Eno's Fruit Salts with adequate results. Then, as the sun was shining, Avery's window blinds were pulled down, while some of Carter's admirable invalid furniture was brought for an invalid."

This travesty of his idea made Baron de Ville meditate without in the least convincing him. Finally he said it would be annoying to be imitated by other advertisers, but he was willing to risk that, and at any rate he would have a clear run for one number. I could not persuade him, and we parted on the pleasantest terms. I do not believe that I ever saw the Baron again.

I went then to the attack of sterner stuff, arguing with old supporters who had decided to drop out and pleading with new people who did not want to come in. On my rounds I drove about all day in one of the little carts that were called Ralli carts, with a smart bay cob and a liveried groom, and I need scarcely add that no equipage could have been more unsuitable for the City. By its very frailness it tempted great vans and drays to give it a bump. To a certain extent my task was exciting and quite sport. Often I had entire days blank, not a single



order after all that long hunt. Then would come a golden day with three or four kills in it. But on the whole I hated it all, and to this time the memories of disappointment that it brings back prevent me from being harsh to those almost unbearably persistent nuisances who come to one's house in the middle of one's working morning and try to make one buy an electric sweeper or take out a life insurance policy.

Unquestionably I succeeded in improving the Annual's illustrations.

Oscar Wilde recommended a black and white artist of whom he had just heard. I wrote to this artist and made an appointment to come to my club. The club servant announced his presence saying there was somebody who gave the name of Townsend waiting for me in the hall. I hurried down to the hall and to my disappointment, instead of finding the artist, I saw a lad apparently of fourteen or fifteen years of age. "You are from Mr. Townsend," I said, inquiringly. "I *am* Mr. Townsend," he replied with all becoming modesty. Astounding. He was more than fifteen but still *very* young. Townsend very soon received full recognition for his talent, and he later became Art Editor of *Punch*. He did some excellent drawings for me, and moreover introduced me to other young illustrators in the persons of Mr. Fred Pegram and Mr. Ronald Gray, who both had a marvellous power of drawing pretty, refined, well-bred young ladies and not the mere large-eyed vulgar sirens of the popular magazines. I rather think that they achieved this happy result by employing as models their own charming sisters. Another of my new artists was Mr. A. J. Finberg, and still another William Parkinson. But good as the team was, I did not feel content until I had added one more member to it. This was Sir Bernard Partridge, for whose magnificent draughtsmanship I entertained a fervid admiration. He did some truly beautiful things for me, wash drawings and pen and ink, notably the frontispiece to a story called *Joan of Arc* that was written by my mother. Not very long ago I asked



him if he remembered this particular drawing, and he was able to recall it. I have it packed away somewhere.

My authors came to me in various ways. An Editor friend supplied some likely names. Also I persuaded my sister to take up her pen and make stories, and she gave some contributions that were highly approved. In the same urgent manner I set Leo Trevor to work, and I am glad to think that but for my importunities he might never have been a writer at all. His first story was called *The New Sub*, and Seymour Hicks dramatised it and put it on the stage. His second story was *Common Clay*, and Leo himself adapted this, making a very successful three-act play of it, and renaming it *Brother Officers*. Arthur Bouchier took the principal part in it.

Then I put an advertisement in *The Athenæum*, inviting manuscripts for "a well-known annual publication." The result of this advertisement was overwhelming. Manuscripts poured in by dozens, by fifties, and I had to set everybody within reach to help in reading them, my brother Gerald, sisters Fanny and Rosie, and our inseparable Leo Trevor. Very few of the things were suitable, but many were up to a high standard of merit, and it was rather painful to think of the large number of distinctly able people who were without adequate channels between themselves and readers. One whose work I was rejoiced to obtain was Cutcliffe Hyne, the future creator of Captain Kettle. But certainly the most remarkable response to my appeal came in the manuscript of a long story by Arthur Machen called *The Great God Pan*. This story fascinated us. I read and re-read it, and was always thinking about it. But unfortunately it was many times too long for my purpose. With heavy regret I was compelled to return it. Years passed before *The Great God Pan* appeared as a book, and then it made Mr. Machen's reputation.

My efforts, such as they were, proved of no avail. One year the results of *The Mistletoe Bough* showed very



badly. Next year a queer sort of listlessness had possession of me. I let time pass without preparing for the publication, and still delayed long after things should have been approaching readiness. It was as though I thought that the Annual would come out of its own accord. Naturally it failed to do so. That autumn there was no *Mistletoe Bough*. I had allowed it to fade and die.

If I felt any shame I consoled myself with the joys of hunting. For some years hunting was now my only strong interest, and such other things as summer, the Riviera, the Italian Lakes in spring were merely interruptions. I hunted as much as I could, chiefly in the New Forest but often with the Vine, and sometimes further afield with the Fitzwilliam. I had two horses of my own, and for the rest I relied on hirelings. So very many of them have I ridden that I could write a book about hired hunters. It is a mistake to think that these hirelings are colourless and without character. They frequently have a great deal of individuality. As a single instance of idiosyncrasy, I used to ride a horse belonging to Marsh of Basingstoke. He was handsome, a fine leaper, fast on his legs, and with perfect manners. Yet at long intervals of time he would stop dead and resolutely refuse to budge. Nothing could move him, although he showed no bad temper or malice, but seemed rather as though he himself felt regretfully unable to proceed. Marsh had had all-day fights with him but was always defeated. Then an amazing discovery was made. If you turned him completely round, by the right through all the points of the compass, until his head was in the original direction, he would at once go on, and give no more trouble for many months. If, however, you turned him round by the left it was no use. He continued to stand stock-still. He did it only once with me. I was riding to a Meet with friends. And when he stopped, I forgot for a moment or two what I had to do. Then remembering I turned him round the right way, and on he went. My companions, puzzled, asked me what the dickens I had been doing. I made some excuse for my



strange manoeuvre and it contented them. I would not give them the real reason.

In regard to horses, whether hirelings or one's own property, it is wise to still keep something to yourself you will not tell to any.



## A HAPPY HUNTING GROUND

IT was in the course of a driving tour that my father and mother found our part of the New Forest, and, as a good many other people had done before them, they immediately fell in love with it.

We all came there, then, in the springtime of three consecutive years, to this little hamlet of Bank—or, to give it its ancient name, Annesley Bank. At Bank there was a large cottage that provided accommodation for my father and mother, and provided meals for all of us. For sleeping places we were “potted out” in the different cottages, all of which were scrupulously clean. My father, who was very fond of building and full of a quite inexhaustible energy, almost at once resolved to build a house there. An excellent site was possible in a good-sized meadow, surrounded with a fringe of the various cottages, including at least a couple large enough to have been farm-houses—as perhaps once upon a time they were. To obtain this small domain, comprising, as it did, virtually the whole hamlet, my father was obliged to purchase a fair number of cottages. This he did with little delay. Three or four of the cottages had to be cleared away in order to make an entrance to our as yet unbuilt house. The occupants of these were moved to other cottages at the almost neighbouring hamlet of Gritnam, which my father had bought for the purpose. By the fourth year we were able to live in our house. As I have said, it was small at first, and, according to our idea, was to remain small; but, in fact, as I have said too, it was added to again and again until it grew quite considerable.

The New Forest, needless to say, was a glorious place



for children, and it filled our cup with delight. We were old enough, particularly Fanny and I, to appreciate the beautiful scenery—those woods of old beech trees, with the tender spring sunshine flickering down upon the high white columns made by their branchless trunks, the marvellous emerald colour of their young foliage, the mossy ground and little ridges that were kept in such heavy shadow as to prevent the clusters of pale stars made by primroses in flower from being at once visible. Those shadowy groves intoxicated one by their sheer loveliness. There was an entrancing stream with a sparkle of pebbled shallows and dark almost secret pools within easy reach, and in one direction we could find deep thickets of hawthorn and holly that comparatively were like an impenetrable jungle. The holly was a truly amazing growth, making great trees as well as a close undergrowth.

We made friends with the cottage boys, going about with them in happy amity. They led us birds-nesting and into other unlicensed amusements. One of them, Purse, displayed remarkable excellence as a thrower of stones. Another, by name Sims, was a dear fellow, who had developed a regard for me, and bubbling over with affection made me accept trophies of birds' eggs that he had collected on my account. He was the son of a notoriously bad character, a poacher, and violent at that; the desperado of the district, with probably an exaggerated fame. The only grown person who accompanied us was William Wiltshire, a true forester, and he had the heart of a child, although about forty years of age. He was an adept with the local weapon—the snogger.

As we grew a little older we used to have cricket in our field. John Wiltshire, the butcher, a brother of William Wiltshire, had a tremendous swipec that finished over his left shoulder, and sent the ball to leg in a great "boother". William himself possessed a stonewall defence. Then we had our beloved Knight, a groom or two, and any available recruits. If we had Harry Chart with us he was the only straight bat.



The rest of us I fear all followed the butcher's example and tried to slog everything to leg.

I must not forget Bert Pearce, a most amiable lad of about eighteen or nineteen, who was a great sufferer from asthma. He bowled the most atrocious grubs, delivered as fast as he could, and going along the ground for practically the whole length of the pitch. Most contemptible things they were, and yet surprisingly getting wickets. He said to me once, with bright eyes and happy smiles, speaking of these balls in breathless satisfaction: "Yes, they 'ops an 'ops, an' 'ops, an' 'as 'em."

I think that the fact of our once living in the cottages, and our early companionship with the youth of the cottagers made a bond between us very much closer than is usual between the dwellers in large houses and the surrounding inhabitants. Although, to my regret, the time came when the boys ceased to use our Christian names and would insist on calling me "sir", while I became "Mr. William" to their fathers and mothers, instead of "Master Willie", I used to feel that their affection and friendliness had not altogether disappeared.

These mothers and fathers were most unquestionably very fond of my mother. She did much for them, and was always warmly interested in their welfare.

On the other hand, although hitting it off so comfortably with the inhabitants of small importance, we had made a bad start with the gentry, who naturally thought themselves very important, and I am not sure if we ever lived down the discredit of our beginnings.

A boy had been knocked over by a wagon, and had one of his legs broken. He was the son of Sims, that notorious poacher, but of his father's reputation we knew nothing. Hearing that these people were so poor that they sometimes had nothing to eat, my father said that at least they should not want for bread, and gave a standing order for the delivery of bread to their cottage. Then one or two gentlefolk, as delegates of the others, asked my father to stop this trifling largesse at once, lest it should appear that he was defending an outlaw





W. B. MAXWELL. AGED FORTY-THREE







and supporting him as against themselves. My father of course said that having given his word he could not possibly withdraw it, but he hoped there would not be the unfortunate consequences that were apprehended. Further risking blame, my mother then had compassion for the poor boy lying all day and night in the unchanging attitude entailed by the plaster of Paris casing of the broken leg. She suggested that I should go and sit with him and read to him. I went off to do this, and did not feel the least reluctance until I arrived at the cottage door. The cottage was one of a small row, and the occupants of the other cottages were also of bad repute. Mr. Sims accepted my self-introduction grudgingly, and certainly offered an ominous appearance. He was a great hulking ruffian of immense strength. Nor was Mrs. Sims at first cordial. She was a very tall and gaunt woman, with straight black hair, a rough voice, and a wild manner—together rather like Meg Merrilies. But what disconcerted me and made me quail was not the forbidding aspect of my hosts, but the intolerable odour of the cottage itself that came floating out from the heavy and stagnant air within. However, one gets accustomed to anything if one sticks to it. I learned to support the atmosphere, and Mrs. Sims for her part soon received me on my visits with a friendly welcome. She knew that her poor son liked my company, although he did not say so to me. He lay in an almost unbroken silence, but at long intervals had a slow smile. I suggested that the weather being warm we might have the window open, and this was immediately allowed.

I read him the stories of Hans Andersen, and except for that smile of his I could not have known if he understood them, until after the second or third day he asked for one of the stories to be read to him again. Then a day or two after this I became conscious while reading that the door behind me had almost noiselessly opened, and that there were people standing on the threshold. When I raised my eyes to the window I saw that there were people there standing outside in the small yard. These were the remainder of the Sims family and all



their neighbours, drawn there by reports concerning my reading. I read them my young friend's favourite story, and really it was wonderful to observe its effects. All these rough ignorant people were spellbound by the magician's words. They did not make the slightest sound, they scarcely drew their breath, probably they had never been so quiet in their lives, while the fantasy, the beauty, and the strangeness of what they heard took possession of them, lifted them out of themselves, carried them far away.

My father, as time passed, still indefatigable even in bad health, had bought a considerable quantity of property at Lyndhurst and about the Forest. At Lyndhurst he did a great deal of building, including many badly needed cottages, and he was always making improvements by building at Bank. After his death my mother continued this work, making out of the original nucleus of two or three of those small houses some excellent little residences, as well as beautifying the old Bank cottages. Two unwanted cottages were converted to make a house for Sir Robert Price, M.P., and Lady Price, who proved to be most pleasant neighbours. Then the Master of Trinity and Mrs. Butler came in summer to one of the improved dwellings. Another distinguished new-comer was Sir Fletcher Moulton, the famous lawyer, who took the lease of a cottage that our bailiff Jones had enlarged on his own account. My mother's own house was in all the guide books. Drivers of chars-à-bancs and cars with tourists halted on the high road in sight of it, and pointed at it. All the world seemed to know that she lived in the New Forest and that she was particularly identified with the spot called Bank.

In these circumstances it struck me as really odd that Sir Fletcher Moulton when raised to the peerage should choose as his title "Lord Moulton of Bank". But I suppose he thought it was all right, and certainly my mother did not mind. Later on he bought the house of which he was then only a tenant, and this brought



him a little nearer to a justification of the territorial title.

He was of course an altogether welcome recruit to our community. Urbane and gentle in manner, he accommodated himself without difficulty to any society in which he found himself. I almost at once felt that he was the cleverest man I had ever met. Obviously he had a grasp on the whole realm of human knowledge, and the cleverness seemed to be almost mechanically perfect, while in his erudition there was a kind of scientific accuracy, as if any opinion he put forward on any subject must be susceptible of a mathematical proof.

He gave me a wonderfully luminous analysis of the differences between the mind of a lawyer and the mind of a poet, and he told me, I remember, that he had always taken the greatest care of himself physically in order to get the best out of himself mentally. Throughout his years of discretion he had adhered to this rule—in examinations at school and the university, in law essays, in Bar cases.

"As it were," he said, "I bring myself to the post in the pink of condition." At present, he said, he had nothing more important to do than the delivery of considered judgments for the Court of Appeal, but before writing one he gave himself some light wholesome food, not too much of it, then he took himself for a little walk, and after the walk, although not tired, rested himself for an hour. After that he sat down at his desk.

"Perhaps of no consequence, the work," he said modestly. "But after all I am paid seven thousand a year for it. So I should be ashamed not to try conscientiously to earn the money."

The Forest's wonderful stretch of varied country, open moor or common land, deep woods of ancient trees, beeches and oaks in their natural state, and vast artificial enclosures of fir trees, was probably the only really wild and untended ground in England; for in my early days there was no application of forestry to the



old woods. These were given the freedom of nature to ruin themselves and renew themselves as best they could. The theory was that if thus left untouched, they would in fact renew themselves and keep going for ever. I had my doubts of this, but I think down there opinions were a little tinged with the selfish thought that the woods and indeed the whole forest would last our time.

There were genuinely wild animals in it, more particularly a fairly large stock of fallow deer. A few red deer existed also, but these undoubtedly had been brought in, and they did not increase in number. It has been often maintained with authority that the fallow deer are lineal descendants of the herds that were there in Roman times.

The Forest itself was governed by the Crown, while all the Commoners' rights and so forth were looked after by the Court of Verderers. The representative of the Crown was called the Deputy Ranger, and he resided at the Queen's House, at Lyndhurst, a comfortable old house built in the reign of Charles II.

When we settled in the Forest the Deputy Ranger was Mr. Gerald Lascelles, brother of the last Lord Harewood and uncle of the present peer.

I had thought, with many others, that he had an extremely soft job—a house free, a good salary, and little more to do than to ride about and hunt and shoot—until I read his book *Thirty-five Years in the New Forest*, giving a plain account of his very considerable labours. Then I saw how much I had wronged him. In the same book he wronged himself in rather belittling his skill as a hunter of the wild deer, whereas in fact he showed good sport under great difficulties during a short season when he carried the horn as an understudy, and never had any failures due to lack of art.

He was much liked by his friends, but not generally popular, and I do not think that he was desirous of popularity. Certainly after his first arrival he did not display any effort to gain friendly feeling from the New Foresters. Perhaps just at first he had wooed them, and they rather



broke his heart by their stolid resistance. They were people of a stamp entirely different from his, being bucolic, simple, wedded to old habits, whereas he was full of life, very distinctly a man of the world, and possessed of wide interests. He was always very agreeable to my mother, and I thought that I myself was going to get on well with him—I wanted to—but nothing came of the wish. Yates had told me to do an article describing him for the series of “Celebrities at Home” in *The World*, and I did this to the satisfaction of Lascelles, but to the disgust of almost everybody else, because I praised him, and said he was good-looking, with a Van Dyck beard. Out hunting I could hear those words—“Van Dyck beard”—uttered mockingly on a good many pairs of lips. But it did not become known that I was the culprit.

Mr. Lascelles had a great sense of humour, but again that was quite different from the fun enjoyed by the Forest gentry. To them a joke was something that you saw with your eyes—a man pitched over his horse’s head into a bog; a lady sitting down with a bump on a too highly polished floor; somebody mistaking the back view of a total stranger, and in the belief that he was an old chum hitting him a sharp blow between the shoulders. Those were all clinking jokes, and in speaking of them it was said: “I only wish you had been there to see it.” Whereas the jokes of Mr. Lascelles were usually imparted by word of mouth. They were no rougher than a gentle play on words, or a mild stroke of satire.

Of the Forest hunting the most characteristic was afforded by pursuit of the wild deer. It pleased strangers. I was myself more than pleased by the picturesqueness and the varied scenery it unfolded as we plunged down into the noble old woods, clambered steep hill-sides clothed with heather, galloped in openness and freedom over the wide moorland, and plunged again to the low ground and a sylvan stream.

The buck-hounds were a private pack started by Mr. Francis Lovell. Mr. Lovell had married a sister of the



then Duke of Beaufort, and I think that the nucleus of the pack came from the Badminton kennels, the largest available hounds being chosen. He had lost an arm, I believe in a shooting accident, but he was a splendid horseman, with a perfect seat on a horse. Although having the use of only one hand for all purposes, Mr. Lovell hunted his hounds himself, with the aid of an efficient whip, and further assisted by two charming and very knowledgeable young daughters, who could do some most useful work stopping hounds, turning them, bringing up tail hounds, indeed, obeying any orders which their father called out. He was very humane, and sometimes to the disgust of bloodthirsty followers he would save a deer at the last moment instead of killing it.

Later when the attractions of the hunt brought larger fields and a bigger establishment became necessary, subscriptions were received, and finally, I think, after Mr. Lovell's retirement, it became an ordinary subscription pack. He was succeeded in the mastership by Mr. Walker and Mr. Festus Kelly.

In the spring-time of these years my mother usually hunted twice a week. She had a truly magnificent grey mare called Vixen and a stockier, less interesting brown mare called Peggy. Our incomparable knight was her pilot, and led her through difficulties with as much art as discretion. My mother was a very brave, but not a very safe rider. She was much too absent-minded; and I know that, as time passed, I began to suffer agonies of apprehension every day she was out. I longed for the day to be over and all its risks at an end. It was lovely then to ride home with her and sympathise in her great enjoyment of the whole thing. She never seemed to be really tired after the longest run. If her mount was Vixen she too showed no sign of fatigue. That grey mare was the one perfect horse that, as is proverbially alleged, comes to each of us in a lifetime.

In due course I turned to foxhunting and put stag-hunting back in its proper place, an amusement or relaxation, but never worthy to be the business of existence.



The foxhounds were in the control of a club (it professed to be one of the oldest of such institutions in the country), and I remember I was so keen to wear a red coat that I persuaded two kind elderly friends, Colonel Martin Powell and Major Ward-Jackson, to ignore a rule of the club and get me elected before I was twenty-one. I continued to be a member of the New Forest Hunt Club for decades after I had ceased to hunt down there.

Of the young men who were my contemporaries I remember Henry Powell, Ernest Wingrove, Tommy Timson, John Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, Sir Philip Hunloke, Lord Forster, Henry Compton, Godfrey Heseltine and his brother Christopher, Richard Charteris, Sir Edward Penton, Stanley Pearce, Sir George Thursby.

Several of these became Masters of the Hounds. In after life I had no further relations of any sort with them, except with one, Lord Montagu—and he was the one that I had seen least often in the beginning. Nevertheless our intercourse attained at last quite affectionate terms.

It is curious how men of advancing years cling to those who have known them in their youth. When really old they become like a little group who have sheltered upon a ledge of rock amidst the rising waters of a flood. They are washed off, one after another, until it comes to one's own turn. Then I suppose it is as if the whole rock, the whole world, was submerged and had disappeared for ever.

John Montagu was amiable, versatile, industrious, enterprising. He recounted with childish delight any recent adventure or exploit of his. He was a pioneer of motoring, and in its early days a very valuable patron of the industry. While motor cars were still a complete novelty he drove King Edward the Seventh all round the Forest in a car that must have been just like the things that annually turn out for the "Old Crocks" race to Brighton.

The Forest hunting, both deer and fox, used to continue (and perhaps still does continue) all through the month of April. And during this month, since



hunting had ceased in all less favoured districts, we had an incursion of visitors, including many of the great hunting swells. In the warm bright weather, with butterflies hovering over blossoming heath, some days were no more than an apotheosis of "coffee-housing", but it was almost sufficient sport to us Foresters to study the appearance and manners of the swells. We had, as I remember, Lord Lonsdale, the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Worcester, several Masters of Hounds from the Shires, including Colonel Burns-Hartopp, Sir Merthyr Guest from the Blackmore Vale, Sir Claude Champion de Crespigny, Lord Wenlock, Lord Leconfield, and Lord Howth, fresh from Ireland, who came thus as a spring visitor and afterwards ripened into a resident.

Swell! I love that old word for a person of extreme excellence and splendour. I don't know what young people call them nowadays—not bucks, bloods, or nuts. Perhaps they don't call them anything. I do not believe it myself, but many would say that hero worship is dead, and the young people do not ever require to express reverence and approbation.

At any rate, I scarcely ever hear the word. Lord Ribblesdale used to speak of a swell, and certainly he was one himself. At present my friend E. V. Lucas employs the term, but, I think, only in regard to literary lights. He has said, when I argued with him: "Oh, rubbish, Balzac was a real swell."

Our permanent local swell, and a big one at that, was Lord Londesborough, the well-known person that I have mentioned before as being a lavish patron of the theatre. He possessed many houses—Londesborough Park, Scarborough Lodge, and later Blankney, as well as the largest house in Berkeley Square, into which Lord Rosebery moved when he gave it up. But I think he and his family were fondest of the home he had made for them in the New Forest. He had one son, Francis, who succeeded him, and four daughters. I had a great liking for Francis Denison, but we had more to do with his sisters. In the summer they used to come to us at Richmond for a happy day, and those visits gave us the



greatest pleasure. We took them for drives to Bushey Park and Hampton Court, and played games of hide-and-seek indoors, and cross-touch in the garden. They were charming, attractive young people—the eldest, Lady Sybil, nearly grown up, and the others, the Ladies Lilian, Ida, and Mildred, following her fast. I am happy to think that all of them, except Lady Lilian, are alive. Lady Ida had brown hair, a bright complexion, an impulsive manner, and was really the most delightful girl imaginable. Full of fun, and even willing to go some distance towards meeting a tomboy on equal ground. She married Sir George Sitwell, and brought into the world three staggeringly clever children—all three rapidly known to fame for their brilliant and original gifts with their pens—Miss Edith, Mr. Sacheverell, and Mr. Osbert Sitwell. I have often been puzzled by the problem that these young people's literary talents offer to one for solution. They cannot apparently have been inherited, unless from a very remote source. Neither on the Denison side nor on the Somerset side is there the slightest taint of poetic fancy. Sir George Sitwell, I believe, is very learned, even bookish, and has written books, but, as far as I know, he has never done any imaginative writing. Nevertheless these three of another generation sprang up as born writers of poetry and other work of creation and fancy.

Even before additions were made to Annesley Bank, we had spare rooms in which to accommodate friends. Among notable people who used to occupy them was Henry Labouchere. He and his family came for ten days or a fortnight at a time.

When Labouchere ceased to write for *The World*, he started a weekly paper of his own—*Truth*. This immediately became very popular. And he must have enjoyed from it an even larger revenue than that given to Edmund Yates by *The World*. Labby in *Truth* continued his exposures of financial frauds, and also ran a pillory for country magistrates, calling attention



to the incongruity and worse of the sentences they recorded. The magistrates themselves writhed under this sharp discipline, but there can be no doubt that it tended to heighten their sense of responsibility, and even to improve their power of judgment. The social paragraphs were very amusing, and in them he and Yates used to chaff each other, saying: "No, no, Edmund, this really won't do." Or "Take care, Henry, you blundered again badly last week."

With the wide publicity afforded by *Truth* my mother started the very first of the funds for giving country holidays to poor children. Known as "Mrs. Maxwell's Holiday Fund," it grew rapidly. And when my mother handed the management over to Lady St. Helier its growth was well maintained.

Labby was a queer complex character, thoroughly kind at heart, generous in his impulses, responsive too; but in public he affected a hard, dry sort of manner and in private a cynicism that misled people in their opinions concerning him. For instance, he was absolutely genuine in his political convictions. Many people did not believe this, thinking that, being by all his circumstances so far removed from the working classes, he could not, as he did, ardently sympathise with them. In one respect his cynicism was real, and it made a weak spot in his general outfit. Often disinterested himself, he seemed to find great difficulty in crediting others with disinterestedness. In fact he had no solid belief in the virtue or integrity of human nature. He seemed confidently to think that every man has his price, and that if you can afford the price you can always buy him. There could scarcely be a more fatal mistake; for this lack of complete belief in others would have defeated him as a ruler, had he ever been near to the premiership. But the progress of his political career was cut short by Gladstone's treatment of him. He was excluded by the aged statesman from the Cabinet in which he had worthily earned a place. At the time it was generally understood that Queen Victoria had flatly refused to countenance him as one of her ministers; and Labby,



who finely maintained his dignity, merely protested against her refusal as being unconstitutional. Mr. Gladstone, however, denied that he had been at all influenced by the Queen in the matter. I remember that many thought that Sir Vernon Harcourt should have interfered and supported his colleague by also protesting to Mr. Gladstone. He did not do so, and before long Mr. Gladstone treated him in just the same way by advising that Lord Rosebery should be sent for when he gave up. Sir Vernon had thoroughly well earned, and must have expected, the successorship as Premier. He was an arbitrary old gentleman—that Mr. Gladstone.

Labby, as nephew of Lord Taunton, had inherited the bulk of his uncle's fortune, and I think that all his life he accumulated more money. Two or three times he talked to me of the advantages in business transactions of being a rich man. For instance, he invested largely in blocks of London flats, which in most cases were being sold for what they might fetch by companies that they had rendered bankrupt. He said that this was distinctly a rich man's opportunity, for when a property—even at a give-away price—is going to fetch sixty or seventy thousand pounds you have very few competitors, whereas for properties going to fetch merely ten thousand pounds there would be half a dozen or more people in the auction room who could give that price if they cared to do so, and might therefore bid up boldly. I believe that Labby's flats were very remunerative to him. Another instance was when Mr. Frank D'Arcy had lent him his private stand at Epsom for the Derby, and Mr. and Mrs. Labouchere entertained a good party down there. It was Galtee More's year, and this splendid horse started at four to one on. Labby said this was the rich man's chance. These odds meant that it was a certainty, and the real odds would have been much more like a hundred to one. He backed the favourite heavily, indeed for as much as he could place with the bookmakers, and Galtee More won in a common canter.



Mrs. Labouchere had been Henrietta Hodson, the actress—a clever artist and a fascinating personality. She was great fun and very kind. She and Labby, and later their little daughter Dora, were intimate friends of ours. At Richmond we had them comparatively near us in Pope's Villa, where they entertained in a varied and amusing way, with open-air plays, fireworks, and what not else. When with us at Bank Labby wrote his *Truth* contributions in a couple of days, and for the rest of the time was free. He joined in our simple life cheerfully, playing games when called upon—Consequences, Stool of Repentance, How-When-and-Where.

He was quite remarkably good as a talker in his own characteristic way. He took up what one said, amplified its sense, and made it more concise and polished. This gave one a comfortable illusion that, as well as listening to a brilliant talker, one was talking brilliantly oneself.

The various tales about him as a young man made quite a legend, and he would tell a few stories of himself. One I remember particularly. He said that only once in his life had he enjoyed a complete revenge. It came about in this manner. When at Eton another boy had taken him to his parents' house, which was situated in the district, and there leading him down the garden into an orchard house this boy stood and ate peaches. When Labby asked for a peach the boy said: "No. Pigs look on." These were shameful words to fall from a host's lips, and Labby resented them enormously. Then, years later, when both of them were grown up and Labby was Attaché at a Legation on the Continent, an Englishman was arrested and put into prison for some offence against the laws or regulations of the state. He demanded an audience of Labby, and being brought before him proved to be his old friend—or enemy. The prisoner greeted him effusively, reminded him that they were old schoolfellows, and begged him to obtain his release without delay. A word from Labby would of course set him free. But Labby shook his head. "No," he said. "Pigs look on!" And the poor wretch was taken back to prison. But, as a matter of fact, having tasted



this glorious moment, Labby spoke the desired word, and liberty was at once granted.

Arriving on one of his visits to the New Forest, he brought us a magazine with a number of Wells' *War of the Worlds*. He praised it, and we all concurred. It was our introduction to H. G. Then my brother Gerald found him independently with *Wheels of Chance*. And soon then came the immense treat of *Love and Mr. Lewisham*.

I have never seen a man so completely absorbed as Labby was when reading. He seemed absolutely to have gone into another world. Once, travelling by train from Waterloo to Twickenham, he sat reading at one end of the compartment throughout the journey, and did not recognise his wife and daughter, who were sitting at the other end.

Mrs. Labby said that he could at times be terribly irritating. He bothered her with his fancies about food. He liked minced meat and was always asking for it. "But," she said, "you had minced veal two days ago, and last week too. You can't have minced veal every day." "Why not?" said Labby. "Very well, you *shall* have it," said Mrs. Labby, irritated beyond endurance. And day after day this food was provided for him, and he ate it cheerfully. Weeks passed—months passed—and he still ate the minced veal in the same contented manner, and without a word of comment. The thing of course got on her nerves. She wanted to scream at the mere sight of him and his veal. Finally she broke down or burst up, and told him that as long as he lived he should never have minced veal again.

Oscar Wilde also came to us several times. He was beginning to write short stories, and he read one or two of them to us after dinner. Very diffident at first, and reading hesitatingly, he was delighted when my mother unstintingly praised his work. Immediately then he recovered full confidence, and read with a pleasure that he did not attempt to conceal, giving out his best passages in resonant tones, and laughing heartily when



his jokes came. One of the stories thus imparted to us before publication was *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, and another, I think, that pretty fable about the family ghost in the mansion that he haunts when it has been let for the summer to a party of rich Americans.

Among country people, including our countryside, there was still a strong prejudice against Wilde, but at the same time they showed great curiosity about him, and evidently craved a close sight of him. My mother invited them freely to luncheon. It was amusing to see how quickly Oscar overcame their distaste, and won them to him. I think I never knew him fail in this conquest over strangers. Only the other day Chartres Biron told me of how he, although hostile in all his feelings, succumbed on a first meeting to Oscar's personal charm. It must have been there, this great charm, since it could affect a man of the world as shrewd, hard-headed, and widely experienced as Biron.

Wilde declared that when reading he read both pages of the book at once. He saw them as one picture. But this boast, he said, applied to light literature, not to books of science, or closely printed history. Cheerfully submitting, he allowed us to put him to a test. We opened a book at the first page, laid it on the billiard-room table, and clustered round to watch him. It was I think the third volume of a three-volume novel. He turned the pages fast to begin with, then faster and faster, and a little slower towards the end of the book. We did not time him. But he could not have been more than three minutes.

Closing the book with a smile he handed it back for us to study and then question him. He stood the examination without a single mistake. It was this sort of thing.

"Can you tell us, Oscar, where Wilfred fell from the clouds?"

"He dropped in on his uncle and aunt at Cheltenham."

"What was the strange ambition of Colonel Hillgate?"

"To finish his days at Trinidad."



" Good ! Does he so finish them ? "

" He is doing so when the book ends."

" Did Yvonne Price marry John ? "

" No."

" Did she marry Bernard ? "

" No. She decided not to, and in parting with him she spoke beautifully. This is what she says. ' There can now be only one word for us, dear Bernard. Good-bye. Let us say this word unflinchingly. Let our hands touch for the last time. Our lips too, if you will. Then let us go our different paths through life without rancour or regret.' " And having delivered this speech in full round tones Oscar laughed triumphantly.

He had not only mastered the whole tale, he could quote passages from it verbatim.



MY WORK

FROM the time of my father's death I helped my mother secretarially, and in the management of her house property and the publication of her books. As I mentioned, there was a considerable amount of property in the New Forest, and she owned a much larger estate at Richmond. Although at both places regular agents looked after things, there was much small detail as well as all important negotiations that needed attention. All her books were in her own hands, including the first issue of each new novel and the subsequent cheaper editions. "The Author's Edition" was unceasingly selling and reprinting. Her position in this respect was I think unique. For in fact she was her own publisher. She bought the paper, gave orders to printers and binders, and finally sent the bound and wrapped books to Simpkin, Marshall, and Company for distribution.

These matters gave me some occupation, but they were not nearly enough to keep me continuously busy.

I had always been troubled with occasional fits of sleeplessness, but now after a few years I was attacked by a most persistent insomnia. Night after night I lay awake, not merely for a part of the night but for the whole of it. Dawn, the renewed sounds of daily life, the entrance of a servant with the morning tea, found me wide-eyed, unhappy, exhausted. Often I was very tired when I went to bed, but I seemed to be more tired when I left it. Few things are so distressing as to lie down in a condition of heavy fatigue, with a normal longing for rest and oblivion, and then to realise that one is not to obtain sleep. Resentment, an irritation as



against fate itself, possesses one while the miserable hours pass without even temporary solace. There comes a restless fever in the blood, a discomfort of the bodily frame, an increasing torment of the mind.

In my case the trouble was greatly enhanced by the recurrence of an old sadness. The melancholy of my night thoughts was like a sea of dark waves, flowing over my head, drowning me. If I looked at the future I could not see a gleam of hope. If I looked back to the past there rose pictures of confusion, error, lost chances, missed aims. I was a failure, a futile useless person of no value to himself or to anybody else. When I thought of all that my dear mother had done for me I hated myself for never having done anything substantial for her.

It was she, the benefactor, the marvellous companion, the friend of friends, who rescued me from my slough of despond.

At that time it was an axiom with doctors that a sufferer from insomnia must not read at night. Or perhaps, if he might read a very little the last thing, he must choose something almost devoid of interest, and absolutely without any exciting quality.

My mother said in effect that this was utter nonsense. To an active-minded person reading was the only possible method of defence against sleeplessness. And as to excitement, no book that ever was written could equal the dreadful internal excitement that one wished to quell. Far, then, from choosing dull or vapid stuff, one should choose the most exciting things one could find. "Get your books round you," she said, "and begin to read as soon as you are in bed. Don't think of sleeping at all. Think you mean to read on right through the night." For this purpose she obtained for me all the works of Alexandre Dumas—sixty or seventy volumes—in the paper edition.

Still further she had a reading lamp arranged over my bed, with a cord of which the end had the shape and size of a hen's egg. This lay under my pillow, and I had merely to give it a gentle squeeze in order to extinguish



the light. This arrangement was to avoid any necessity to rouse oneself when on the point of dropping asleep, or to make any movements at all.

I read till five o'clock and then slept happily till the servant woke me at seven. After a time I was sleeping from four o'clock, then from three o'clock. Then there came a night when I fell sound asleep five minutes after I had gone to bed. I was cured.

The sad thoughts had been driven out of the night, but unfortunately their sadness remained with me by day. I passed through long phases of horrible depression. Even when going about the world, or mingling with cheerful company, even when enjoying life, I seemed to be cut off from a full communication with it, a close contact with external things by veils or screens through which these appeared dimly without receiving any adequate impression of colour and animation. I think I contrived altogether to conceal any perceptible effects of this discomfort, and I certainly never spoke of it to other people.

At last I took up my pen again and began writing, hoping that as a merely mechanical exercise it would prove like narcotics dulling pain. I began by sending short stories and articles to *The World*. And once more Mr. Yates, actuated as before by his regard for my mother and father, welcomed me warmly. He used to write suggesting the sort of thing that he would like me to do for him. Soon then I became a regular contributor ; and sometimes I had both an article and story in the same number.

Amongst those on the staff of the paper were William Archer, doing dramatic criticism, George Bernard Shaw, criticising music, Eleanor Glyn spinning her delightful satirical *Visits of Elizabeth*, Cosmo Hamilton, writing imaginary conversations and social studies, Bernard Becker, an all-round man who wrote most of those amusing interviews in the series that was called *Celebrities at Home*.

I ought to have been proud to find myself among such



a band, but I cannot honestly say that I recall any feeling of self-congratulation. I was very genuinely grateful to Edmund Yates for his kindness.

Unhappily my few opportunities of expressing a sense of obligation to Mr. Yates himself were cut short for ever by his death.

The new Editor of *The World* was Mr. Drummond, who was in all respects very unlike the ordinary journalistic people of this period. He seemed obviously to belong to Piccadilly and St. James's rather than to Covent Garden and Fleet Street. He was elderly, grave, yet kindly, and ceremoniously polite on all occasions.

With Yates disappeared a prominent figure of the newspaper realm. In some respects Edmund Yates was really a notable personage. He gained men's friendship in a quite extraordinary way. It seemed that everybody took to him at first sight. I think that he must have had a charm as a young man that was based on high spirits and love of life, and much of this attractiveness long survived. He was very hard-working, very ingenious, not perhaps a very brave man, and yet with sufficient courage at every crisis of his affairs to sustain him in a bold choice of the path he should follow, although afterwards, when the die was cast, he might suffer an agony of doubt and apprehension concerning what the future held in store. It was thus he left his employment in the Post Office, abandoning the chance of an ultimate pension, and relying on his pen for continuous and sufficient maintenance. It was so again when he started *The World* newspaper with Grenville Murray.

Edmund's father was Yates, the actor, who had become manager on his own account of the Adelphi Theatre. Mrs. Yates was also on the stage, and they lived in a little house in the Strand that was really a part of the theatre. It must have been very like Mrs. Nye Chart's house next door to the Brighton Theatre, except that it was smaller, and indeed sadly cramped for accommodation. Nevertheless in its narrow space



Edmund was brought up from childhood to a vigorous and robust adolescence.

Then soon a clerkship in the Post Office was given to him by the favour of one or other of his father's influential friends. Mr. Yates had many of these. The Adelphi was visited by the notabilities of the epoch, such as Count d'Orsay and Castlereagh, and also famous literary people, including Sheridan Knowles, Sam Warren, Theodore Hook, Thomas Hood, Talfourd, Thomas Moore, and last but very far from least, Charles Dickens.

As a journalist Edmund rapidly made a name for himself, and then was becoming even better known when he met my father. He describes in his volume of reminiscences how my father drove him back to London after a dinner at Greenwich, and invited him to join the staff of a new journal that was about to be launched. He says further: "My subsequent connection with Mr. Maxwell was satisfactory—I hope to both of us, certainly as it was to me. I was indebted to him for constant employment, and can never forget that he had sufficient faith in me to allow me, wholly untried as a novelist, to make my first experiment in that character in the pages of his magazine (*Temple Bar*). But whether my first very brief engagement with him was for any benefit or not, I am quite unable to say."

The significance of that last sentence lies in the fact that one of the first contributions, if not the first, made by Yates for my father's paper was a portrait in words of Thackeray. The article gave mortal offence to the great novelist, who immediately put the matter in the hands of the Committee of the Garrick Club, desiring that judgment might be given as to whether the conduct of Yates, who knew him personally by meetings at the Club, and in no other manner, was not intolerable in the society of gentlemen, and inferentially inviting the Committee to expel the culprit. Thackeray proved himself to be altogether implacable in this matter, and the quarrel widened itself till it included Dickens, who pleaded for leniency in favour of so young a man erring unwittingly and meaning no harm. Such advocacy



and much more, together with some abortive legal proceedings, all failed in their object, and Yates was eventually dismissed from the Club. I refer to these facts because to this day the case of Yates and the Garrick is cited and considered whenever a club committee is desirous of getting rid of a member.

Later he edited *The Welcome Guest* for my father, and later still edited *Temple Bar*, when the first editor, G. A. Sala, gave up.

In an account of experiences Edmund says : " Some of the wittiest and most amusing letters I have ever received came to me during my editorship of *Temple Bar* from Miss Braddon, several of whose earlier attempts made their appearance under my direction, and who has always honoured me with a steady friendship.

" ' Did you see,' she writes, ' what the — says about *Aurora Floyd* and my philosophy in the matter of beer, brandy, and cigars and tobacco? It is all Mr. Tinsley's fault for advertising me as " Mary Elizabeth ". I used to be called Mr. Braddon, and provincial critics were wont to regret that my experience of women had been so bitter as to make me an implacable foe to the fair sex. They thought I had been " cradled into magazines by wrong ", and had learned in the Divorce Court what I taught in three-volume novels.'

" Hear her again as to the style in which these same three-volume novels are very often written.

" ' The Balzac-morbid-anatomy school is my especial delight, but it seems you want the right-down sensational floppings at the end of the chapters, and bits of paper hidden in secret drawers, bank-notes and title-deeds under the carpet, and a part of the body putrefying in the coal-scuttle. By the by, what a splendid novel, *à la Wilkie Collins*, one might write on a protracted search for the missing members of a murdered man, dividing the story not into *books*, but *bits* ! " Bit the First : The leg in the gray stocking



found at Deptford." "Bit the Second: The white hand and the onyx ring with half an initial letter (unknown) and crest, skull with a coronet, found in an Alpine *crevasse*!

" ' ' ' Seriously, though, you want a sensational fiction to commence in January, you tell me. I cannot promise you anything new, when, alas, I look round and find everything on this earth seems to have been done, and done, and done again! Did not Jules Janin so complain long ago in a protest against romanticism, i.e. sensationalism? I will give the kaleidoscope (which I cannot spell) another turn, and will do my very best with the old bits of glass and pins and rubbish.

" ' ' ' There they all are—the young lady who has married the burglar, and who does not want to introduce him to her friends; the duke (after the manner of —) who comes into the world with six-and-thirty pages of graphic detail, and goes out of it without having said "bo!" to a goose; the two brothers who are perpetually taken for one another; the twin-sisters ditto, ditto; the high-bred and conscientious banker, who has made away with everybody's title-deeds. Any novel combination of the well-known figures is completely at your service, workmanship careful, delivery prompt.' "

Yates was thirty-three or thirty-five at the time my mother first met him, soon before she wrote him those letters, and she said he was already becoming too heavy. She said, I remember, too, that he reminded her of the man in *Little Dorrit*, whose nose came down and moustache went up. But if no longer handsome, he was genial, kind, wanting to do well by people, and so he continued to be.

While still in the vigour of middle age and able to enjoy all the good things of life, including success, Yates founded *The World*, "A Journal for Men and Women", and presently made a big hit with it. Labouchere helped him greatly by contributing the boldest possible attacks



on City frauds and sharp practitioners of finance. These drew wide attention. For the rest, all the articles, the series of unconventional interviews with famous people, and its paragraphs, seemed fresh and inspiring. The paragraphs were sharply pointed, gaily mocking, often disrespectful. But they were never malicious—until one of another kind slipped in unnoticed by the Editorial eye.

It was something to the effect that last week in the Shires a sensation had been caused by the elopement of a young lady from the hunting field with a married man. Names were not remotely hinted at, but something was said concerning the rank in the peerage of the parties concerned. It might seem quite impossible to "sheet this home" to particular people; yet this was immediately done, and the father of the young lady became furiously angry. He instituted proceedings for criminal libel, with a result that Yates was tried, convicted, and sent to prison for several months.

This happened after Labby and Granville Murray had both left the paper, and Yates was its sole proprietor. He could afford to pay for the privilege. For then and to the end of his days *The World* brought him a more than handsome revenue.

In two years I had written a large number of stories and articles—nearly all for *The World*—but a few for other periodicals. I had even begun to write a novel. It was a story of a girl's life, describing her childhood very fully, and her experiences at school at equal length. This attempt amused me, but after I had written about eighty thousand words I suddenly felt that it was too silly and vapid, so I put it aside in disgust. Then I ran through *The World* a series that I called *The Confessions of Lady Maybury*. And I followed this with another series of unconventional stories or satires under the title of *Fabulous Fancies*. Both these sets of papers appeared in volume form, to my surprise a publisher for each having come forward of his own accord. The first was Edmund Downey, publisher and author.



The second was Grant Richards, energetic publisher, but as yet not an author. *The Confessions of Lady Maybury* had been given an unexpectedly good press, but they did not sell. *Fabulous Fancies* had a similar fate. As Grant Richards said, they had left me where I was. And he added rather enigmatically that this was always the trouble with that sort of thing. He himself had not expected a different result. In these circumstances he declared firmly that I must write a novel. I told him that I did not feel up to this, but Grant Richards merely looked at me calmly through his eye-glass, and entirely disregarded my words of doubt. He said that we had better meet to discuss the novel, and he suggested that to this end we should lunch together one day soon at Prince's Restaurant.

This we duly did. And looking back at it really it seems to me an odd sort of interview. Grant Richards talked and I listened. If I interposed my voice he hushed me at once with a monocled glance or a gesture of the hand. All protests were ignored, and compliments seemed to give him no pleasure. I told him that though I could not accept this invitation, I was very sensible of the honour he did me in making it. It was pleasant to find that he had so much confidence in my power, and also so great a share of enterprise. Instead of replying, he told me exactly the sort of novel that he wanted. It was to be strong stuff, colourful, full of movement, with a good lively plot, but stopping short of melodrama. Indeed it was to be really well written, so as to gain popularity without alienating criticism. Then, after looking at his watch, he said that everything now being settled we had better proceed to make an agreement. By this time I had no resistance left in me. He took me off to his office in Leicester Square, and there, with the assistance of Miss Hemmerde, his clever and amiable secretary, he dictated :

"A novel by W. B. Maxwell." And, turning to me :  
"What is your title?"

"I have no title," I murmured.

"As yet unnamed," he continued.



Soon then he came to the question of royalties, and here I had my say successfully. I told him that the publication would be of no use to me unless he could make a real success of it. And I proposed that no royalty at all should be paid on the first three thousand copies. Grant was reluctant to accept this offer, but he confessed that those free copies would certainly assist him in advertising and launching. With a little argument I prevailed upon him. And I would advise any young author who can afford it to make this sort of arrangement for his first book. Of course one has to trust the publisher to play fair. The agreement was finally drawn up by my friend Mr. A. S. Watt.

I told Watt, of course, that not a line of the book was written, and that I doubted if it ever would be. Without confessing that I had already tried, I said that I felt incompetent to write a novel. But I gathered from Watt (a little inaccurately I now understand) that he could not believe anybody would experience real difficulty in writing a novel. He added, smilingly and reassuringly, that when a person had written one novel he almost invariably writes another and probably several more.

My book was eventually called *The Ragged Messenger*, and it met with a quite considerable success, its sales running into many thousands after the free thousands to begin with. It passed into numerous different editions, was dramatised, and has been three times filmed. But I always felt that I owed much of this satisfactory result to the pushfulness of Grant Richards.

I now was to produce a successor, my Number Two, and I had not an idea for it. At last in despair I fetched out that abandoned story of a lonely young woman's struggles for an honestly earned livelihood, and with great diffidence I read it to my mother, asking her if it might possibly do. My mother put heart into me by declaring that it would do splendidly well, but she said : "*Let your girl grow up.*" I underline this fine piece of advice. I was describing the life of my little heroine at school, and meandering on about her with inordinate length and detail. Often when reading the long episode



of childhood with which so many novels open nowadays I have thought of that advice and wished that the author would allow his hero or heroine to grow up.

I reduced about seven of my early chapters to two, and then finished the book very comfortably. My plan or ruse in writing it was to pretend to myself that it was a short story and therefore endeavour to write concisely and avoid all redundancies. Nevertheless the book worked out eventually to about two hundred and fifty thousand words, the length of four or five ordinary novels of the period, and so needed some further sharp pruning. I called it *Vivien*. People liked it and it enjoyed large sales. After it I made a much more ambitious effort with *The Guarded Flame*. Again I had good fortune.

It was, I think, while doing these tales in *Fabulous Fancies*, that I felt a real pleasure in writing. The pleasure deepened with *Vivien*. Then with *The Guarded Flame* it became intense joy. By it I seemed to be brought even closer to my mother; for I now understood much that had been puzzling in her absolute control of emotion, or power of escaping temporarily from a too long continued distress of mind. I had always been begging her to spare herself, not to work so hard, and not to take up her pen in hours that should have been devoted to rest. Now I saw that she was not thus fatiguing herself but refreshing herself. Now I too could possess this other world into which I might retire, as she did, for solace and relief.

Beyond this delight there was my sense of exhilaration in the conviction that I really had power here, that at last I had found something that I could do, and that everything was open to me if I just let go. But strangely there ran beside this feeling a dread that though I could write I would not have anything to say. Both then and later I felt singularly devoid of inventiveness and a total inability to weave plots. Yet year after year the critics have praised me as a story-teller, saying that, whatever else I am, I am a good story-teller, and one whose invention never flags.



For Alick Watt was correct in his prediction that I should write further novels after the first one. I went on writing. Now I see by the publisher's list that, in spite of a period of five years during which nothing came from my pen, I have issued thirty-eight books. These include my latest novels, the first two volumes of the *Men and Women* series.

I made a rule, never since broken, not in any circumstances, and no matter how highly one may be tried, to answer press criticism. It is, I think, a rule that young writers might well make their own. Nothing can really be gained by replying, and the reply seems especially foolish when it begins with an expression of gratitude for past favours. It reads then like those letters from obscure actors or actresses in *The Era* and *The Stage*. "Mr. Editor, Sir, In your otherwise flattering notice of my variety act on Worthing Pier, you give the Merry Milkmaid to somebody else. Whereas it should also have been Yours truly, Katie Belford."

Certainly I was grateful to my critics. They gave me a very generous treatment—notably James Douglas, Max Pemberton, Ford Madox Hueffer, Sir W. Robertson Nicol, William Archer, Conan Doyle, Hornung, St. John Adcock, Gerald Gould, Richard King, Oakley Williams, Clive Holland, and several more. If sometimes one of these good friends or any other reviewer seemed unfair or mistaken, I let it pass.

Here are two instances that demanded the exercise of a little self-control.

In reviewing a book of mine, a quite important critic blamed me for my bad taste in a harrowing description of the death of a beloved child. Well, there *was* a beloved child in my book, but the critic had not noticed that the child did not die.

The second instance occurred in connection with *The Guarded Flame*. For the requirements of this story, and with the aid of my old and ever valued friend, Doctor James Johnstone, I invented a drug called Lentzine, pretending that it was named after Doctor Lentz, a German, who had discovered in North Borneo



the berry from which it was derived. Well, then, another critic of weight took me to task for wearying the reader with far too many details about Lentzine, a drug which, once a novelty, was now familiar to all medical men, and indeed often employed by them. Evidently in the belief that I was merely showing off, he wound up his rebuke by saying that a little learning is a dangerous thing. I thought yes, and so is a little ignorance.

I continued writing, and worked hard at it. I worked harder and harder as time passed. In this connection may I repeat a strong warning that I have already given to others? The worst penalty that one incurs by persistent idleness in youth is the love of hard work that overwhelms one with advancing years.



## SOME SUNNY MEMORIES

IT was at Annesley Bank, after a long severe winter, that my poor father died. I wish I could give a sketch that would do justice to him.

He was Irish ; a big strong creature, deep-chested, broad-shouldered, and possessed of very great vitality. In youth he had been strikingly handsome ; and although with age he lost the delicacy of features and took on too much bodily weight, he remained always a fine figure of a man. He had a presence and an air. I used to hear our servants and the Richmond tradesmen praise his commanding aspect. They said that Mr. Maxwell was " a splendid-looking gentleman ".

By temperament he was courageous, sanguine, open-hearted, and exuberantly good-humoured. He sometimes made so much noise in joyous welcome of a friend that at a very little distance it sounded as if he was violently quarrelling. But he scarcely ever quarrelled. When he did, it was because he felt that he had been wilfully injured, and then he was quite unappeasable in his resentment. Nothing could make him forgive the offender.

He was essentially Irish and this fact showed not in accent, pronunciation, or manner, but in various traits, including occasional queer ups and downs of mood. Breaking off an enthusiastically hopeful narration of some new project, he would suddenly fall into darkest pessimism, giving as he sank a forlorn gesture that expressed his almost complete despair. Then as suddenly, after a few minutes, he would rise from the black depths and again be all hope, energy, and good-humour. Beyond this, another transient phase with him



was really remarkable. Also Irish in character, an inheritance perhaps from remote ancestors, he seemed at times to possess a gift of second sight. I have mentioned his strange prophecy in regard to Miss Fortescue's marriage engagement, and out of many less accountable premonitions let these examples suffice.

A certain Baron Grant, the meteorically successful financier of the period, after amassing presumably vast wealth, built himself a large house at Kensington Gore. Standing back from the road with isolated grandeur it was quite palatial in its size and architecture. When it was finished and decorated but not yet occupied Baron Grant invited all London to come to a party for the purpose of inspecting and admiring it. With the rest of the world my father went to the party. On the threshold he stopped short instead of immediately entering the hall. He stood quite still for some moments, and then said very firmly, but in an unusually quiet voice, "This house will never be lived in." And it never was. The Baron's affairs came to grief. The house after being empty for some years was pulled down, and not a visible trace of it remained.

One afternoon at Richmond my father was walking along the main road that leads to London. A man driving a pair of horses in a big phaeton swept by. My father looked at him, then stopped, and with downcast eyes stood motionless. Then he raised his head, looked after the vanishing carriage, and said almost in a whisper: "That man is driving to his death." It was too true. Not many hundreds of yards further on the man took a wrong turning, entering a narrow lane that became a no-thoroughfare instead of keeping to the main road. The horses took fright, there came a horrible smash, and he was instantaneously killed.

On this and other occasions my father never took any credit or said "I told you so." Indeed, so far as I remember, he never made any allusion to his forecast. It was as if he had spoken in his sleep and afterwards had forgotten all about it.

Another trait was the belief that, like the hero of



du Maurier's *Martian*, he could feel the north. This fancy grew stronger with time, and he refused to sleep in any bed that had not its head to the north. In hotels when our good comfortable rooms had been chosen and all was settled he would drive us almost crazy by examining the compass that he carried at the end of his watch-chain and saying decisively: "No, this won't do. The polarisation is wrong. We must find accommodation where the beds can be properly polarised."

That buoyant good humour of his continued until his health began to give way. While it lasted he was always jolly and indulgent to us children. We traded on his lavish generosity with money. We went to him and asked with an affectation of humbleness if he could give us just a little pocket money. Unhesitatingly he brought out a handful of coins and distributed them, giving us crowns and florins when sixpences and three-penny bits were as much as we ought to have had at our tender age. But we dreaded the sight of his purse. "Yes," he would say, smiling, "take all that I have"; and he put the old leather purse upon the table for us to open. It contained a few coppers, a key or two, and perhaps a tradesman's card with some pencilled notes on it. "There. See! Who steals my purse steals trash," he said, laughing uproariously. It seemed to us like the tremendous laughter of a friendly giant.

He was kind, and I wish I did not remember how poorly we repaid his kindness. He could not be to us what my mother was, but we might have treated him fairly. And I fear we did not. We took all that he had to give and gave scarcely anything in return. When he wanted our company we often withheld it. When we saw him coming towards us we often avoided meeting him. Growing older we made a mock of sayings that were characteristic because of a portentous weightiness with which he delivered them. They were usually very sensible, although we chose to consider them ridiculous and mirth-provoking.

Once when he had taken us with some young friends to Hampton Court we deserted him and the elders, and



went prancing off through the gardens by ourselves. He upbraided us afterwards for this prolonged desertion, saying with weighty tones : " When you are of a party you should remain of the party." We thought this extraordinarily funny and behind his back made a scoff of it. But it was in truth a wise and good maxim. In later life I have felt very indignant at the bad manners displayed by people who failed to remain of a party that was *my* party.

Another of our scoffs was his " Compliment from the Bench." In the course of a lawsuit that he was bringing the learned judge praised the clarity and logic of some letters that he had written. He came home delighted and told us gaily that he had had " a compliment from the Bench." How otherwise or more appropriately could he have described the incident ? Nevertheless it was accepted by us as a fine jest and we bandied it about for years.

Once or twice I know that we hurt him. He was telling us an anecdote and had reached a point when a policeman was about to say something. We had interrupted two or three times, and he saw that we were only half listening. He stopped the anecdote, rose from his chair, and spoke with wounded dignity. " Very well. Now you will never know to your dying day what the policeman said."

But there were a few occasions when he " got back at us ", and unexpectedly made us feel very small.

He was showing us some pictorial designs for a book-cover and he asked us to help him by selecting the one that we thought the most attractive.

" Fanny, my dear, how does it strike you ? "

" Your candid opinion, Willie."

" What say you, Rosie ? "

We gave our advice and he listened attentively, even deferentially.

" Good," he said, when we had all spoken. " That's most useful. What you think others will think. You know, I am only using you as '*foolometers*'."

Foolometer ! I did not like that word—it stuck



unpleasingly in my mind. "Foolometer—the instrument by which one measures the folly or stupidity of human beings." I imagined the definition in a dictionary.

Much of my father's career was noteworthy. He and his four sisters, losing both father and mother when quite young, were brought up by guardians or trustees in the neighbourhood of Limerick, their native town. But by the time that he was approaching his twentieth birthday the trust funds seemingly became exhausted and he was told that henceforth he must gain a livelihood for himself. One of his sisters, the one of whom I have spoken, had married Mr. O'Donnell, a man of property. Now the other three went to the United States, no doubt to some friends or family connections out there. Two of these married, eventually giving me a group of charming American cousins. The other took a nun's vows and became in religion Sister Marie de Chantel. Later she was Mother Superior of a large Californian Convent, and she used to write to our mother wonderful letters, full of saintliness and affection, although they had never met, and to send her blessing to her nephews and nieces in spite of their being heretics.

Not yet twenty, quite alone in the world, and without means of support. That, I understand, was my father's situation after the departure of his sisters. But Gerald Griffin, the then famous Irish poet, had somehow developed a powerful faith in my father's intelligence and ability. He sent him, young as he was, to London as agent or manager to superintend the publication of a collected edition of his poetry. In London my father successfully carried through the task, until with the issue of the last volume after a year or two the task and the salary alike came to an end.

Then unaided my father surmounted all difficulties and dangers. He picked up some guineas in journalism and found higher remuneration from work done for Insurance Companies. At twenty-five he was a publisher of enterprising methods and beginning to do well.



Doubtless he had gained knowledge of paper and print during the issue of Gerald Griffin's volumes. For the rest he relied on courage, character, and luck. They did not fail him. He bought old periodicals, he started new ones. He published all kinds of books, chiefly bringing them out through different publishing houses and not often with his own imprint.

At thirty-five he was really a force in Fleet Street. He had a dingy little office in Shoe Lane, the same small narrow premises with which he started. Although so small amazingly big things came out of it. He founded magazine after magazine. *Temple Bar* and *Belgravia* were his most lasting successes. He surrounded himself with the highest class of contributors and he paid them largely. "Liberality was the order of the day," as Edmund Yates said of this in his *Recollections*; and Edmund Yates told me laughingly that he and Augustus Sala, Percy Fitzgerald, and a few more, were like cabs on a rank outside. When my father wanted one he opened his window and shouted down into the street. Then the one at the top of the rank took the job—to edit a paper, do a series of articles, write a guide-book, or whatever it was—while the others moved up on the rank to be hailed and employed in turn.

My father year by year was very prosperous, but he never made the tremendous profits that nowadays are possible. In some respects he was like a Lord Northcliffe or a Sir Arthur Pearson who had lived thirty years too soon. He had a persistent notion of a periodical very similar to their productions with an irresistibly popular appeal. But he could never quite realise his aim. The nearest that he came to wealth was while he possessed a half share in a big daily newspaper, the *Standard*. The family of his first wife and other amateur advisers persuaded him to get rid of this share. He sold it, and used the proceeds in a settlement upon my stepbrothers and stepsisters. Had he kept it, he would have presently begun to enjoy a regular income of about forty-five thousand a year; for the *Standard* bounded into general favour and a wide circulation.



On the other hand, if missing that "big money", he annually gained enough to maintain the whole cost of our family life, and thus my mother was enabled to put by all her earnings.

He worked unceasingly, he worked too hard. Finally doctors and friends prevailed upon him to retire. He handed his business over to my stepbrothers Jack and Bob. Jack, a splendid type of man, who had inherited both my father's youthful beauty and adult business industry, soon left the funny old house in Shoe Lane and gave large new premises to a rapidly expanded business. Here I fear that he literally worked himself to death. Bob was never in the slightest danger of doing this. Distinctly an idle apprentice, but of a mild and blameless kind never likely to sink low in the social scale, he was an amicable and most amusing person, such good company that everybody, even the sternest advocate of labour, liked him.

Retirement did not bring my father repose. He filled his days with active tasks. As he walked from room to room one could hear him murmur a question to himself. "What have I got to think about next?" My mother answered him eagerly. "Dear Max, you have *nothing* to think about—only to rest and to take things easily." Unhappily he could not do it. He had never learned to do so, and in his old age it was too late to learn.

When illness tightened its hold on him all the old good-humour vanished and his temper became very bad. Life under the same roof with him was often difficult. Trifles irritated him; grievances that were not very substantial made him beside himself. He had brief storms of unreasonable anger. He rated the servants for imagined faults. Sometimes all through a meal he made people uncomfortable—and most of all my mother, who was very unhappy in seeing the unmistakable evidence of the deterioration of mind that such excesses afforded. She used to implore me never to forget that he was not always like this.

In the last eighteen months of his life, when he was a complete invalid and for most of the time confined to



the house, there came upon him a change so startling in its unexpectedness that it seemed almost miraculous. He ceased to make fretful complaints. Instead of giving displays of bad temper he showed us nothing but gentleness and affection. He was pathetically grateful for any service that was rendered him, and would apologise to his valet and his nurse for being so troublesome. His eyes used to follow my mother lovingly. They looked dully at the door that she had closed behind her, and did not brighten until she came back to him. Throughout this last phase she was his devoted companion.

It wrung one's heart to be compelled to thwart him in anything, and we had no choice but to do so with regard to his most strongly expressed wish. He wanted to go yachting. He said he would charter a big yacht with accommodation in her for everybody and go right away to the Mediterranean, to the Atlantic Islands, and other far-off places. He made his secretary write to agents asking for information and for particulars of available vessels. Agents responded with a profusion of informative papers and he would sit for hours examining them. Then he would ask us to accept one of the offers, and make arrangements, and help to get him to sea. He could not be obeyed. His medical advisers said that the thing was quite impossible, not to be thought of in his condition, and they asked whether he had always had a great love of the sea. But he had rather hated the sea and been a very bad sailor. It was the strange fancy of a dying man.

After his death my mother never rode again. She mourned for him and was for a time inconsolable. To relieve her persistent sadness I persuaded her to travel. We went from place to place about England, staying only a night or two in each, and then settled for a longer stay in Bude at the Falcon Hotel.

Situated by the picturesque harbour at the entrance of the little town, with all its life passing below the windows, the Falcon in those days was a simple but



extraordinarily comfortable inn of the most old-fashioned sort. From our sitting-room we stepped out into a little garden that was full of sunshine, the pomp of great red fuschias, the perfume of heliotrope and pinks, the faint song of insects, and a gentle sea-borne air that was like the caress of a cool kind hand. Honest friendly Cornish women, with bright complexions and gay print frocks, waited upon us in the morning, and in the evening put on sober black, but could not take the colour from their cheeks, since it was Nature's pigment and not bought at the chemist's. The food was homely and good, a welcome variation from the pretentiously indigestible fare of an ordinary table d'hôte. Every day our agreeable young landlord, Mr. George Brendon, asked us politely if, as he hoped, we had slept well, and we could always truthfully say that it was not the fault of the beds if we had not.

His kindness to us was unlimited. He had a pack of fox-hounds, maintained by himself and his father at their own charge, and although the month was June and the season long over, he insisted on bringing out the hounds to give me a morning's sport. It was a glorious scentless day. We conscientiously hunted over the high downland immediately above the cliffs, drew patches of gorse up there and little dense spinneys on the lower ground. Then we climbed again higher, still higher. During any pause for consultation with the huntsman the hounds rolled on their backs and stretched themselves—conduct that told its fatal story. In fact we found no foxes. Nevertheless it was splendidly enjoyable in that fine scene, with the yellow gorse and bright young grass, and, cropping up through the coat of verdure, huge bronze-grey boulders and jagged black rocks, on which the sheep sprang about dizzily, pretending to be white chamois.

It was light, colour, and warmth, tempered by the marvellous breeze coming straight out of the West. I think that this prevailing wind of the west country in spring and early summer is the finest wind that blows.



Mr. Brendon lent me his horses for hacking, and would not let me hire them, saying, in order to make me easy in my mind, that he was very glad to have them exercised. He gave me his company for long mornings, showing me places that I could not have found without him, and leading me in gallops over the firm sands of a wide bay. His father, who had never even seen me, asked that I should be mounted on his own favourite hunter. I think you have to go right to the West of England to meet that kind of open-hearted and unstinted hospitality. It ends only with the land itself, and then if you go straight on westward over three thousand miles of ocean, you will find it again in America.

Presently we made the acquaintance of the elder Brendons, who lived at a distance of a mile or two from Bude in a jolly sort of house with a lovely garden. Mr. and Mrs. Brendon received us in the kindest manner, gave us a sit-down Cornish tea, and showed us all round the garden. It had sub-tropical shrubs and plants, and I think it was there that I saw in England for the first time strong clumps of bamboo. They had daughters, and one of the Miss Brendons was a dowser, and had acquired a considerable reputation in the district by successful divination of water in very unlikely situations. She granted her services when they were requested, but refused any fee for them. Frankly and unpretentiously she gave us a very interesting account of her sensations when the forked piece of wood began quite unexpectedly to agitate itself in her hand. Mr. and Mrs. Brendon had many friends. One whom they valued highly was Henry Irving. He was himself a Cornishman.

My mother of course loved this part of the world, because it was the home of her race. While at Bude we drove over to St. Kew, near Padstow, to see the Braddons, and to go round a farm that she owned at St. Kew. The heads of the family, Major and Mrs. Braddon, were living at the old family house of Skisdon with a bevy of nice daughters. My mother had not been born at Skisdon, but her acquaintance with the



comfortable old house began when she was a very little child.

On our first visit to Cannes, seven or eight years before the time about which I have been writing, we had an introduction from our friend Eugène Rimmel to Monsieur Pilar, who was a wholesale manufacturer of perfumes. He was a very kindly old man, with an old wife as kindly as himself. They had a villa that stood back behind large grounds on the Croisette, where they entertained us all most kindly at luncheon.

It gave us a most pleasantly intimate glimpse of the truly French life, so homely, agreeable, and unpretentious in its character, that is led by rich men of Monsieur Pilar's condition, with their grown-up family about them, and old faithful servants waiting upon them and taking care of them.

Monsieur Pilar also took us to Grasse to see his factories. As one drove through fields of flowers beneath the town, the perfume was quite strong, and when one entered the factory it was almost overpowering. There were, I think, two processes employed. One quite uninteresting, a boiling of the flowers in vast cauldrons and so forth. But the other, called the dry process, was much more attractive in its methods. The flowers were laid on a thin bed of lard between plates of glass, and then, somehow or other, the lard extracted or became impregnated with all their scent. Then, again somehow or other, the scent was extracted from the lard and turned into a liquid essence. The power of this essence was astounding. A single drop was sufficient to make a whole bottle of Mr. Rimmel's scent.

Still further, while at Grasse, Monsieur Pilar took us to an old house to show us a large collection of pictures. These were all by Fragonnard. And very pretty we thought them. Like Greuze, we said, one after another. That was the sort of recognition that the work of Fragonnard was then obtaining. When, some years later, Fragonnard leaped into the highest fame and



fashion, the pictures on the walls of that quiet old house in the old French town changed metaphorically into a gold mine for the quiet old lady who owned them.

As one more kindness Monsieur Pilar introduced my brother and me to the Cannes Club, the Cercle Nautique. He was liked and esteemed there.

When my mother and I returned to Cannes after that lengthy absence, we found that the place had altered considerably. It had lost its quiet secluded air, it was beginning to be cosmopolitan, one saw only a few instead of many celebrated persons.

In the old days they used to be "thick on the ground", because gathering together along the Croisette in the morning, and in the afternoon at Rumpelmeyer's and the Nautique. Thinking of that earlier time I remember, as if they were posing for *Fanity Fair* cartoons, the statesman Duke of Devonshire (Lord Hartington), the racing Duchess of Montrose (whose Turf name was Mr. Manton), Mr. Gordon Bennett (the extremely American newspaper proprietor on shore from his much admired *Namouna*), and other notables of similar weight and individuality; while among important villa residents that I recall were Lord Brougham and Vaux, Mr. Frederick Walker, Sir Julian Goldsmid, Lord Rendell, the Chevalier Colquhoun, Captain Perceval. These were hospitable in a sober fashion among themselves. But all the narrow social life of Cannes that existed was governed absolutely by Anastasia, Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. For her amusement Captain Perceval had converted a villa into a club, which he called the Réunion. Those two dreadful words "select" and "exclusive" were applied to the Réunion because membership was refused to some honest but unfashionable people who wanted to join it. Once or twice a week it had a dull little dance, and I passed some long lugubrious evenings with my sister and a girl friend sitting and watching the Grand Duchess lead the cotillon, and standing up whenever she came to give my sister or the friend a turn in the figure. Her male companion or



partner was usually a foppish young Russian. One night late when I was more than half asleep from weariness I found him suddenly before me with a couple of young ladies, one in each hand, and asking me which I preferred—the Rose or the Jasmine. Covered with confusion I had to say in effect that I was not wanting any flowers at the moment and that I did not dance. After that I used to sit even further back, sheltering against the wall.

We lived in a furnished flat at La Madeleine, a solid and well-favoured building that was conveniently situated with good views of the sea and the islands. An occupant of another flat was the first Lord Acton, Gladstone's friend, essayist, and embryo historian, known and respected all over Europe for his great learning. He had with him a very studious son and some good-looking daughters. So far as I can remember, although we saw them every day for months going out and coming in, we had no intercourse of any sort with Lord Acton and his family. Yet, rather oddly, in a subsequent generation when the studious son in his turn had pretty daughters, these were some of my daughter's greatest friends.

Like other large and very important men of that period, Lord Acton was impressive without effort or pose, and he possessed a personal dignity that is never encountered nowadays. His manner was of the grandly urbane order, tempered with weightiness. Altogether one could not but consider him imposing.

If I wished to date this first visit of ours to Cannes I could easily do so, because it was the year of the earthquake.

One night we were all suddenly and startlingly awakened. I had an extraordinary feeling that a tremendous invisible presence had passed through my room, and at the same moment something even more tremendous, like a vast wave of sound, of rumbling thunder, swept onward over the whole country. Our solidly built Madeleine was shaking. It quivered, rattled, and seemed almost to totter in an oscillation very violent



and alarming. Cries were heard, and the hurried movements of people. Then came voices from each floor of the building. Outside there were loud shoutings, ringing of bells, an echo of many footsteps.

It was really quite a bad earthquake, although the actual damage at Cannes was not considerable. Nice suffered more. One saw piles of rubble where old and decrepit buildings had stood, and sometimes a house of greater stoutness that had been literally torn in half. Then on internal walls that had been left standing, although the floors, ceilings, fronts of the rooms had fallen, one might see that almost incredibly some things had remained undisturbed, as, for instance, hanging pictures, books on shelves, candlesticks, glass vases, and a clock on the mantelpiece.

Further along the littoral entire hill villages were destroyed, and the inhabitants were still living in temporary huts years afterwards. In more than one of these villages there had been two or three succeeding tremors, and at the first of them, as we were told, the terrified villagers fled to the church for safety. Then with a second and fiercer tremor the church roof crashed down upon them and killed them all.

I should perhaps have recorded that at the Madeleine there happened something so startling as to give almost as big a shock as the earthquake itself. In the midst of the noise and confusion outside the doors of his flat Lord Acton emerged in his nightshirt, a voluminous white garment reaching to his feet. There was some very slight laughter, which although slight to begin with might soon have become hysterical because of the unstrung condition of people's nerves ; but Lord Acton's majestic glance as it moved round quelled irreverence and compelled seriousness of face. In a most amazing way, despite the incongruity of attire, he was able to maintain his dignity. Indeed he now inspired a kind of awe as well as the old respect. Moreover he immediately took command of everybody and everything, telling



people that it was all over and they had no further cause for fear, and quietly arguing with some who refused to accept his reassuring view.

Lord Acton was not the only person to issue forth in bedclothes. Frightened ladies in nightdresses with a hastily snatched cloak hurried down to the railway station, went off by train, and arrived at Paris still in their nightdresses.

On our return to Cannes we stayed at the Montfleuri Hotel. But the Madeleine was still a going concern, although so much else seemed to have changed. Cannes was a gayer, happier place. As social leader, the Grand Duchess Anastasia had been deposed, and her brother, the Grand Duke Michael, ruled in her place, with his wife, the Countess Torby. His rule was easier and more pleasant. He was patron of the golf club, which formed a popular place of assembly, people other than golf players going there for luncheon and for tea.

Countess Torby's father was Prince Nicholas of Nassau ; and her mother, the Countess Merenberg, told me on my first presentation to her that she had a very strong claim to my regard, because she was a daughter of Pushkin the poet. I should have been drawn to her without this credential and merely because of herself. She was truly a splendid woman, clever, amiable, and full of fun. As well as Countess Torby she had another daughter, the Countess Adda Merenberg, who had inherited her mother's wit and cleverness, and her beauty too. Countess Adda was unquestionably beautiful, and one gave in one's allegiance to her at once and completely. This family were astonishingly kind to me. They drove me out to the golf club, and then soon they let me act as escort to the Countess Adda in long bicycle rides. As well as my pleasure in her companionship, I felt very sensible of the honour of it. If I was in love with her she could not be surprised, since I had merely fallen into the condition to which she speedily reduced all her male companions. On most evenings I used to go and play Poker with them, when one or two other people



made up the table. Very pleasing those evenings were in the quiet spacious room, with the lamp-light bright yet soft, and a wood fire burning, more for the look of the thing than to give heat. At about eleven o'clock tea and biscuits were brought, in the French fashion—a fashion that I afterwards largely adopted.

Madame de Merenberg was Russian in her imperturbability. I do not think she was ever ruffled by anything, although she sometimes pretended to feel annoyance. On our way back from golf we left her alone in her carriage to mount a hill while we others followed on foot. The road was empty until a large and noisy motor vehicle came trundling downward. At this the stupid horses shied badly, and endeavouring to swing round did all they could to capsize the carriage. But the coachman mastered them and they were soon quiet. When we came up he had turned on the box and was addressing the Countess, who had not stirred from her seat or uttered a sound.

"I do hope, ma'am, that you weren't frightened."

"No, my friend, I am never frightened," she said loftily. "But of course if you think there was anything amusing in your performance you are largely mistaken."

Prince Nicholas was a very amiable man, tall, of spare body, with a high-bridged nose, princely and soldierlike, German but not Prussian in aspect generally. His amiability failed him only on rare occasions. But he was perceptibly upset if he lost heavily and continuously at Poker. When, as I remember, he had a long run of odiously bad luck, he became more than irritable and spoke harshly to his daughter and almost rudely to his wife, making querulous complaints of the heat of the room, the pooriness of the light, the loud breathing of a little dog, giving any reason to account for his irritation except the right one. Then the luck turned. He began to win. He went on winning. The cloud passed from his face, the stern features relaxed, they glowed with good fellowship. When he rose to fetch cigarettes or



soda water he smiled down at Madame Merenberg, laid his hand lovingly on her shoulder and said some happy words.

But with an exaggerated gesture and an assumption of resentment and disgust she drew herself away from the gentle little caress.

"No," she said forcibly. "The ill-temper and bad manners of one who meanly dislikes losing I do not greatly mind. But the affection that arises from a gross and vulgar pleasure in winning—that I will not support."

One evening when I arrived our game had already started, but instead of being among the players Countess Adda was seated on one side of the hearth talking to a dark sombre-looking man of about thirty-five who sat facing her on the other side of it. I was presented to him at once and heard his name without the least emotion. He spoke in good English, very politely, but slowly, and with an air suggesting that he expected one to listen to his words attentively. He was the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. After his assassination when I recalled my impression of him I thought that he had seemed a fatal kind of person, a person sombrely bearing the cold impress of impending doom.

He had come to stay at our hotel, and as soon as luncheon was finished he often sat in the outer hall solemnly reading folio sheets of typewritten matter. These papers were always of the same shape and appearance. When I asked him if they were official reports he replied gravely.

"Yes," he said. "They are the history of the Austrian Empire day by day."

Alas, that he should be an instrument used by destiny in the sequence of events that were to bring about the ultimate destruction of that Empire.

At this time King Edward the Seventh (then Prince of Wales) had the *Britannia* lying in the harbour and occasionally took her out for a day's cruise as well as racing her in the Cannes Regatta. One saw him



driving to and from the port alone in one of the funny little victorias that plied for hire on the Croisette. He might be seen too, but rarely, at private villas. He liked the Cercle Nautique, and regularly presided over the weekly dinner there, an informal gathering of about twenty or a few more men. These dinners had become an institution very popular with the club's English members.

In an earlier chapter I spoke of swells, and without doubt the Prince of Wales was the biggest swell in Europe. His prestige at home and abroad dazzled one. But beyond this he himself was so grand. At the club, leather-covered swing doors admitted one to the big room where we assembled before dinner and awaited his arrival. Every time the doors swung complete silence fell upon the company. When somebody else entered all the voices broke out again in chorus. When at last he himself came through the doors that sudden deep hush continued. He stood there, holding one's eyes, shedding his remarkable influence, really, as I said, dazzling one. Then he moved about the room smilingly greeting friends and acquaintances. Then we all talked again.

How did he do it? He made his effect with scarcely anything to help him. I hope it is not disloyal to say that he did not even dress well, but committed patent solecisms, such as wearing a centre stud, instead of the orthodox two studs, and that with too large a jewel. He had the wrong collar. He was stout, short, far too heavy, and yet notwithstanding such handicaps he was so very grand. After dinner the evening's amusement consisted of Baccarat, in which nearly everybody joined. Only occasionally the stakes became high, when somebody was running a big bank. Of course no shadow of Tranby Croft fell forward through time to darken our game.

One evening we were amused by a little incident. The Prince had an empty chair next to him, waiting for someone among his personal friends to come and occupy it. But all at once a very eager excited young man who



had not been at the dinner hurriedly seated himself in the empty chair. Till he looked round he did not even know that the Prince of Wales was at the table. Looking round, and seeing who was the august neighbour upon whom he had thrust himself, he would have sprung up, but the Prince, smiling amiably, restrained him, indicating that he was welcome, and that he should remain where he was. Perhaps already flustered, the young man made a colossal mistake when in turn the cards came to him. He had a point of six, and, contrary to all law, drew a third card. With the additional card he was still able to defeat the bank. This was the highest possible good fortune, for if he had lost he would have been compelled to pay all the stakes on the table. The sight of his upturned cards disclosing the hideous error caused a sensation. Then the Prince spoke. Severely he lectured the young man, saying this kind of thing at length: "You have been supremely foolish, plunging into a game of which you do not even know the rules. You might have remained standing and learnt the game while staking your money without risk. But no, you must needs sit down and take the cards, exhibiting your ignorance, and running a risk which you might not be even able to face. Do you understand? You would have paid everybody their money. All that money. Now you have had a lesson." Then once more he smiled good-humouredly, and gave the young man a friendly little tap on the arm. "I will say no more."

He had said enough. The young man was altogether overwhelmed. With scarlet cheeks and his mouth open he rose and bolted out, not by the ordinary way, but at the back through the billiard room and the cloak rooms. He was never seen again at the Cercle Nautique.

Even stranger was a companion incident that occurred a week or so later. The Prince himself made exactly the same kind of mistake, in not drawing a card when his point was only four. But again, with amazing good luck, the penalty was escaped. It was late at night, and I have



no doubt that he was tired, although he never admitted weariness. He would play for very long hours, and I remember how his equerry, Sir Stanley Clarke, asked him about midnight for permission to go home if not wanted. The Prince cordially begged him to do so, and then, turning to the company and laughing gaily, he said: "Stanley ought to have been in bed hours ago. He is not strong as I am."

For the month of August in a good many summers my mother and I went to Homburg, and we thoroughly enjoyed the simple yet cheerful life that it offered. We always had old friends, *habitués* like ourselves, and new friends that we were very glad to meet. With both we used to go for picnics in the Taunus hills, bigger expeditions to Wiesbaden and the Rhine, and leisurely visits to Frankfort. Agreeably to the local custom we lived in lodgings, thus having freedom to go to any hotel or restaurant that we might choose for our meals. In the sparkling freshness of the early morning the place of assembly was on the park parade where people drank their first glasses of water. But many who were not taking the cure came there merely as to a wholesome exercise. One heard youthful laughter with badinage and compliments. At the flower stall beneath the trees young men bought large bouquets of roses and "bunched" young ladies. Another stall sold newspapers and books in the Tauchnitz edition. Another provided chocolates and sweet biscuits. At night people gathered at the Kursaal, drawn there by the music of the splendid orchestra. One sat on the terrace listening to Wagner as he is only played by Germans and watching many pretty women as they walked to and fro, and noticing how their dresses seemed black in the shadow but changed to the brightest colours as they came into the strong electric light. One year the brilliant uniforms of German and Austrian cavalry officers together with those of foreign military attachés mingled with the gay costumes of the ladies and made them seem almost toneless and sober in comparison. That was a year of Grand





"MISS BRADDON"  
*Painted by W. P. Frish, R.A.*



pounds signed "Joseph Chamberlain". The famous name aroused Miss Carmichael's ancient political hatreds, and hoping to cause annoyance, she replied that she could not venture an opinion, because she had never heard the name and knew nothing whatever about Mr. Chamberlain. On this the banker refused to cash the cheque, explaining in a polite note that the risk was too great, since the gentleman was not known in his own country.



## HOME LIFE

**B**ECAUSE of its sad associations for my mother we now avoided the New Forest and preferred Richmond. There we settled down almost permanently except for Continental holidays. My brother Gerald was still living with us.

In the autumn season one year Lichfield House issued for publication three novels—one by my mother, one by my brother, and one by myself. The book trade seemed to be struck by this circumstance, this triple productiveness of a single family. There was considerable comment in the journals that show interest with regard to such matters ; and the Authors' Club wanted to give a dinner in our honour. But this would have been the kind of public appearance that my mother had always shrunk from, and Gerald and I were quite of her mind. Naturally, however, we were pleased by the compliment and grateful for the kind thought of us that had prompted the invitation.

Then one summer soon I married Miss Sydney Brabazon Moore.

In books of reminiscences nowadays, I observe that wives are scarcely mentioned. If they are, a few cold words suffice. It is as if autobiographers had laid down a general rule to maintain this reticence, having agreed among themselves that it would be gross bad taste to do more than barely hint the intimacies of marriage. Yet if one sits down to write the story of one's life it is surely quite absurd to omit what has probably been the most lastingly important fact of the tale. Autobiography is necessarily egotistical, a necessity accepted by writers and readers alike. The whole thing is self.



Why then stop short when one comes to the better half of oneself?

Boldly breaking the rule, then, if it be a rule, I will say here that in Sydney Moore I became blessed with the dearest and most perfect wife anybody ever had. All that a woman can do for a man, to guide him, elevate him, sustain him, and make him happy has been done for me by her.

My mother was glad that I should marry. Happily marriage did not separate us, for my wife was well content to live at Lichfield House. And to my joy Gerald was remaining there, so that our little close-bound circle was not broken but merely enlarged sufficiently to hold one more within its circumference.

When children came the house seemed to be reopening a closed chapter—for all began again with day and night nurseries, as it had been such a long time ago.

The years ran on more swiftly now, as if to give warning of the pace at which they would slip past me in later life. In this long period of my mother's widowhood, when I look back at it, I see as belonging to it another multitude of friends all whose names I should much wish to give, were it possible.

One that must not be omitted was Sir Richard Burton, the pilgrim of Mecca, and translator or adaptor of *The Arabian Nights*, with Lady Burton, a woman with a beautiful tranquil face, and a manner that was earnest without being oppressive. I believe that their marriage had been an elopement, or in some other way a romantic affair. This is probably true, for in Burton's career no event that was not romantic ever occurred.

Two or three other men of the adventurous type remind me of themselves in this connection—Major Jackson, the Arctic explorer, with a fresh prestige gained by his successful relief of Nansen; Kaid Maclean, of Morocco fame; Edmund Selous, who was my sister's husband and brother of Fred Selous, a field naturalist, solitary bird watcher in uninhabited islands, and author of many books.

Authors seemed naturally to visit Lichfield House,



wanting to pay their respects to my mother and to see her in the home that for long had been something of a focal point or place of assembly for the brotherhood and sisterhood of the pen. Among these we made many real friends—to name as examples, Arthur Morrison, Jerome K. Jerome, G. B. Burgin, Hornung, with whom I remember having some jolly afternoon walks. Charles Garvice and Douglas Sladen were neighbours at Richmond. Maxwell Gray, author of *The Silence*, of *Dean Maitland*, also settled at Richmond, and another welcome visitor was Mr. Frederic Harrison, the philosopher. Herbert Trench and Rhoda Broughton soon became residents. Miss Winifred Graham lived not far off at Hampton; Richard Pryce came to us again and again; and we saw often, but never often enough, dear Mary Cholmondeley, author of *Red Pottage*, with her two sisters. She was greatly valued by my mother, and by Sydney and myself.

Sir George Hutchinson, who was now my mother's publisher, as well as mine, visited us two or three times. He was a genial and very clever man, with funds of varied experience to draw upon in conversation. Once or twice we played golf together.

Another writer, but not a professional, only an elegant amateur, came to stay with us sometimes for a few days. This was a good and tried friend of mine, Colonel Henry Needham. He became godfather to my son and gave him his name of Henry. He never used it himself, because everybody called him "Dot" Needham. Dot had retired after eighteen years' service in the Grenadiers. He was always very smart and trim; tall but so slight that there was scarcely anything of him, and perhaps it had been the slenderness that gained him his nickname. In the regiment and everywhere else he was greatly liked.

When a boy Dot had lived in the house of an eccentric grandfather at Isleworth, just across the river. Thus he had early associations with our district. His brother, Lord Kilmorey, was a writer who came nearly into the professional class. He loved the stage and wrote plays,



several of which met with success, more especially one, an adaptation, called *The Danichefs*. Unluckily as a playwright he became unenviably famous in having had the shortest run on record, a record that has never been beaten even in these times of surprisingly short runs. For Kilmorey's play, produced at the St. James's Theatre, never got beyond the end of the second act.

There were no more Sunday crowds at Lichfield House. Friends came to luncheon or to tea, and sometimes a tea party given by my mother and my wife jointly would be a fairly large gathering.

My mother also often entertained a few friends at Ranelagh. Thanks to the kindness of Sir George Hastings she had been made an honorary member of Ranelagh, and from this privilege she derived a great deal of pleasure. Unless I am mistaken, she and Georgina, Lady Dudley, were the only women members of the Club. George Hastings has real genius for the decorating and beautifying of houses and gardens. But perhaps he never showed his power more completely than at the old country house and grounds at Barnes.

When I think of my mother's special friends, there stands first of all Madame Trübner, widow of the publisher. They had been quite young women when they first met, and although for many years they saw little of each other, fate now brought them together again in these later years. Madame Trübner had a charming old house at Hampton, and her daughter and her soldier son-in-law, Arthur Christie, lived with her. Then perhaps come Mr. Frith and his daughters—Walter Frith, his son, too. Mr. Frith at the height of his popularity, after *The Derby Day*, and *The Railway Station*, painted my mother's portrait. This was one of the few portraits he ever made, and it is generally considered to be altogether charming. It hangs on the wall opposite to my desk as I write these lines. I look to it for inspiration and courage in moments of depression.

Lady Monckton and her faithful son Paul were great friends, only of a later date. But now, in glancing backward, I see that there were so many of these old friends



of hers there would not be space to describe them. I will speak of only one other—Miss Maude Stanley. She was a daughter of Lord and Lady Stanley of Alderley, who were the tenants of Lichfield House (the only time that we ever let it, as I have said), while we were at Chelsea. And out of the tenancy came the friendship. A gratifying circumstance, and a sufficiently rare one, in the relationship of landlord and tenant.

Lord Stanley of Alderley had that beautiful house in Dover Street that is now the Arts Club, and Miss Stanley lived there until her mother's death, when she moved to a smaller but very interesting house in a corner of Smith Square, once, I rather think, the Vicarage. She was one of those remarkably benevolent people of the same material as that from which Florence Nightingales and Nurse Cavells are made. She instituted and kept going a club for working girls, and every summer she brought about thirty of these girls to spend an afternoon and evening with us at Richmond. They were jovial friendly creatures, but very much rougher than girls of their class to-day, and inclined, in their enjoyment of romping about our garden, to pass from fun to turbulence. Miss Stanley used to take five or six away with her for visits to Venice and Rome, where her brother, Monsignor Stanley, spent most of his time. Once when I said how good of her it was to support that close association with these young women, she looked at me half reproachfully, half indignantly, and said: "No, certainly not. It is a very great privilege."

People brought other people, and having found their way to us these people generally came again. Percy Fitzgerald brought Lord Crofton, to whom we all became attached. He was a gentle, noble sort of man, and a great musician. He used sometimes to pay private visits to Queen Victoria and play the piano to her. I think she must have unbent to him more than she usually did to her guests. Also he composed the music of that beautiful but laceratingly emotional hymn, "O perfect love." He was a bachelor, but possessed of charming nieces, who



presently came with him to Richmond. Miss Cholmondeley brought G. W. E. Russell, who was as amusing in conversation as in his books, and I think it was she who brought us Mr. Alfred Tittleton, the Colonial Secretary Lord Howth brought us Professor Mahaffy, the Dublin tutor, so famous for his wit that compared with what one expected he seemed rather dull and heavy. Doctor Farquharson brought us the Chinese Minister. His Excellency's knowledge of English literature staggered one. For instance, he would talk about the novels of Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, and so forth, and he told us, when we expressed wonder at his having read these books, that his uncle made him get up at four in the morning to study them, because of the insight into English life that they might give. This uncle, who had adopted him as a son, was the famous statesman Li Hung-chang. Our friend's name was Li Ch'ing Fong, but he was frequently spoken of as Lord Li. He seemed to like coming to us. Once at least he entertained us in Portland Place. He was solemn of aspect, with pigtail and richly embroidered garments all loose about him, so that one attributed to him the oriental remoteness in spite of his perfect English and amiable smiles. Needless perhaps to add he was of course philosophic, as all cultivated Chinese are. He disappeared from London when the great troubles in China began, and dynasty and government were overthrown. When we asked Doctor Farquharson for news of him, he said that he was sheltering himself in a cave on a hillside, and getting only such food as old servants could take to him at the risk of their lives.

Doctor Farquharson was a Scottish laird, head of a clan, an old Member of Parliament, and a brother of Farquharson the painter. Largely hospitable, he delighted in giving immense luncheon parties at the Carlton Hotel. Our appearance on entering the dining-room never failed to cause "a sensation". The voluminous clatter of knives and forks ceased, and people laid down these implements in order to watch our long procession as it came meandering through the tables. Their



scrutiny was rewarded probably by the sight of the well-known face of a politician, of an actor, an actress, a judge.

I remember an even more tremendous luncheon party at a restaurant with the Duke of Newcastle as host. The occasion was St. George's day, and some of us had attended the beautiful memorial service at All Saints, Margaret Street. I had known Newcastle for a great number of years; my first acquaintance with him carries me back to Oxford and still another group of men, with Douglas Hall at their head. The Duke was a most kind-hearted man and he did much good in an entirely unostentatious way. He had the overwhelming fondness of children that is shown by Sir James Barrie. I felt genuine regret when I looked at his empty chair at the table in the corner of the Carlton Club coffee-room where he usually sat, and knew that he had vacated his place there for ever.

Another person who gave huge luncheon parties exactly similar to those of Dr. Farquharson was Sir Charles Scotter. He was assisted by his universally popular daughter-in-law, May Scotter, and these two together were admirable and delightful hosts. They had what is almost an infallible qualification for making a party enjoyable to their guests, they enjoyed it so intensely themselves. An infectious happiness flowed from them and was reflected in the faces each side of the vast table. Many of these faces belonged to notable people, for "the highest in the land" and its most clever and intellectual—not always synonymous terms—held Charles Scotter in real esteem.

Of the bluff and hearty North country, with a robustly breezy manner that he had brought South as a characteristic of his native place, Scotter was an entirely self-made man, and he had done the making of the man so well that if his son Fred had not proudly assured me of his humble origin, I could not have believed he had not been given all the education and other advantages that fall to the natural lot of the prosperous. Fred said that he began his career in the railway world as booking clerk



at a small station. Here, imprisoned behind wooden walls, he was merely a voice and a quick hand issuing tickets through a small aperture. How then, unseen, unnoticed, performing a task of mere routine, could he possibly prove his great merit and capacity, and gain the consideration of his superiors? Fred Scotter said, and one might imagine how true this was, that getting through the partition and emerging into daylight and the sight of men was the most difficult achievement of his father's career. Nothing checked his upward progress after that.

When he became General Manager of the old South Western Railway the Line was in a poor way. Its only solid reputation was for gross unpunctuality, the discomfort of its antiquated rolling stock, and the slowness of the trains. It paid low precarious dividends and its ordinary shares were quoted as offered at about sixty. Under Scotter's control all this was gradually changed. Passengers travelled by fast expresses in comfortable modern coaches or Pullman cars, and arrived to the tick of scheduled time. It regularly paid handsome dividends, and when he retired the ordinary shares stood at two hundred and thirty-six.

His early retirement surprised everybody, and I remember asking him how so energetic a person could bring himself to abandon his gloriously successful work while still in full vigour physically and mentally. He replied that it was precisely because of the vigour still enjoyed by him that he was laying his labours aside. Why go on? He had made more money and attained a bigger position than he had once dared hope for. Well, now he would put his success to account by taking the pleasures of freedom, by travelling, seeing the world, meeting more and more interesting people. This struck me as characteristically but unusually sensible.

He was a genius in railway affairs, and yet his greatest quality seemed to be a sort of luminous common sense. After retirement he was not allowed to continue unintermittently idle. The Government often called upon him for advice, he reorganised the whole railway system of



Egypt, he worked out all the plans for the movement of troops should a mobilised army ever be required to leave our shores, and these plans were exactly followed when getting the British Expeditionary Force across to France in the Great War.

Scotter was first a friend of my father, then of my mother, and lastly I made him my friend. Sometimes I have banged into his private office at Waterloo early in his working morning, and challenged him to come out for a walk and then have lunch. "Eh, what?" he said, looking up from his desk. "All right. . . . Give me two minutes." In two minutes somebody brought him his hat and umbrella, and off we went. "As a matter of fact," he said breezily, "I had not anything to do. They can get on very well without me." This too was characteristic of him, and it impressed me deeply. It is only the real chieftains who are able to delegate their authority, and who never want to do work that can be done as well for them by subordinates.

Lady Scotter, "Little May", as he called her, was altogether devoted to him. I am glad to be still in close touch with her. When we meet, as we have done fairly often, we talk for an hour at a time of her father-in-law, his hospitalities, and his happy temperament.

I was going to say that a little later Conan Doyle and Lady Doyle gave some of these big gatherings for luncheon, usually at the Berkeley Hotel, but then I remembered that their parties were dinners. I think that of recent times the only practitioner in the line of vast luncheon-parties has been Mrs. Frank D'Arcy. She can also "throw a tea-party" rather larger than the ordinary crowd in the stalls and dress circle on a first night at the theatre.

Doyle and I had been first brought together by the partiality that he was good enough to show for my books. Of one of them, *Mrs. Thompson*, he made a stage play. Several times we seemed to be on the point of getting this well produced, but each time we were disappointed. Then, most surprisingly, Mr. Sydney Grundy, a dramatist with a long record of big successes behind him, wrote



to say that he had been commissioned by Mrs. Langtry to turn the book into a play, and this he had done. Moreover they were ready to make an immediate production. He assumed that I would be satisfied to share the profits with him on a half-and-half basis. I went round to see him at his house in the Addison Road and explained that I had already parted with the dramatic rights. At the same time I expressed a genuinely felt regret that he should have wasted his talent and his time on what must necessarily prove a fruitless task. I hinted too that he had been unbusinesslike in not approaching me before instead of after committing himself. "I know, I know," he said. "Very unbusinesslike. But I can't help it. I had fallen in love with the thing, and when I'm like that I have to start at once. If I delayed or talked a lot I shouldn't be able to do it at all."

If Grundy had been surprising, Mrs. Langtry surprised me much more. She told me that she was tremendously anxious to act the play because the part of Mrs. Thompson so exactly suited her. I asked how and where she could find the suitability. For whereas she was a beautiful and brilliant woman who had had half the world at her feet, Mrs. Thompson was an outwardly unattractive person on the outskirts of old age, who was the owner of a draper's shop in a provincial town. Nevertheless, Mrs. Langtry said, she and Mrs. Thompson were essentially so alike that she felt almost as if they were the same person. Portions of the lives *were* the same. She had lived through some of the episodes that I described; and I described them as accurately as if I had been there invisible watching her story unfold itself. Surely a very strange delusion!

Neither she nor Grundy would take No for an answer, and eventually we made a three-cornered agreement under which Doyle generously allowed Grundy to use his version. It was produced by Mrs. Langtry in America, but without much success. This was perhaps the only circumstance with regard to the affair that did not surprise me.

Doyle was a splendid sort of man, simple, full of kind



thoughts and good motives, and a heaven-born writer. He never wrote a line that did not interest the reader and hold him. Although so modest, he had a proper belief in his own powers, and believed that some of his work was worthy of attention more serious than it obtained. He wanted people to judge him by his novels, *Rodney Stone*, *The White Company*, and the others, and not by his short stories alone. It irked him to be known and praised only as the "Creator of Sherlock Holmes."

In the course of one summer Edward Braddon, my mother's brother, came to England with Alice Braddon his wife, and a young daughter. He was considerably older than my mother, and as a child she had admired and looked up to him, as well as being very fond of him. But while she was quite young he went to India, and there had a sufficiently distinguished career in the Civil Service. On retiring, instead of returning to his native land he went to Tasmania, as so many other retired Indian officials were then doing. Tasmania offered a good climate and pleasant inexpensive living conditions. But there, not following the example of those others by folding his hands in leisure, he threw himself energetically into the politics of the Colony. Very soon he was made its Agent-General, and, coming home then, spent several years in London carrying out the duties of his post. On returning to Tasmania, he obtained the Premiership, and I think continued to be Premier until his death. He loved his Colony, and did a good deal for it in different ways. As, for instance, by opening up its fruit trade. At his own cost he brought the first cargoes of Tasmanian apples to England, advertised them, and put them on the market. Our Government thought well of him, knighted him, and made him a member of the Privy Council.

A little after this we began to have a very frequent visitor in Miss Rosalynd Travers, a granddaughter of my mother's old friends, the Bishop of Gloucester and Mrs. Ellicott. Rosalynd and my wife were immediately



drawn to each other. She was, I suppose, about twenty-three. Hers was an eager and enthusiastic temperament, too fine perhaps for the rough-and-tumble of an unprotected life. But unfortunately disagreements had arisen between her and her family, and she lived by herself. She was a poet, and many readers as well as myself admired her poetry. Of these two were Mr. Hilaire Belloc and Mr. G. K. Chesterton, to whom we were introduced by Rosalynd at the Lyceum Club.

She brought down to lunch with us Dr. Maclagan, the Archbishop of York, and my mother and my wife did him all honour as a Prince of the Church. He was obviously attached to Rosalynd. He gave her affectionate and grateful smiles when she prompted him as to his best anecdotes and reminded him of experiences that we should certainly wish to hear about. Her attitude to him charmed us. He was under her watchful care throughout his visit. She had brought him, and she took him away with her.

Her appearance was arresting. She had black hair, dark brilliant eyes, a high complexion, and her voice was musical, but spoilt by a queer precise way of speaking. This primness of speech contrasted sometimes most strangely with the very bold things she was saying. She possessed a great attraction for elderly men, and finally she married one of them—Mr. Hyndman, the Socialist. He was a fine old man, pleasantly dignified, and yet quite fond of light discussion, only a little old-fashioned in the courtesy and occasional ceremoniousness of his manner. My mother thoroughly enjoyed his company. Very wonderful it was to me seeing him seated in her drawing-room, and thinking of what a firebrand and seeming revolutionary he had been a decade or so before. He and Mr. John Burns and Cunninghame Graham had always been bracketed together in the denunciations that were freely showered upon them during their baleful activities. Two of them—Mr. Burns and Cunninghame Graham—were sent to prison after the disgraceful riots in Trafalgar Square. And I remembered with what disgust and horror I



myself used to think of these men. Of course I judged them only by their dangerous attempt to lead the populace astray, and knew nothing of the men themselves. Now they were respected by the better part of the world, they had changed their views, the mischief in them had gone, they were like burnt out volcanoes, with peaceful vineyards on their scarred sides. Mr. Burns had become a Cabinet Minister, Mr. Cunningham Graham lived quietly as a man of ample means and a master of English prose, and here was Mr. Hyndman, as I now discovered, a highly cultivated person who had always been the aristocrat of the Socialist Party, and was now a solid supporter of the British Empire.

Rosalynd was happy in her marriage, and heartbroken when her husband died. We used to see her afterwards, and there was now something inexplicably tragic about her. She seemed more than unhappy—hopeless. I knew vaguely that the quarrel with her family persisted. But these and her other troubles she kept rigorously to herself. Sydney and I dined with her once at some rather queer rooms that she had at Hampstead, with one other guest—a clever young man, who was like herself a poet. That was the last time we saw her. Not long afterwards she passed with terrible sadness from the world. We grieved for Rosalynd.

Once in an omnibus my mother heard a man say to his companion—"Relations! Ah, relations! *They're the tigers!*"

I have never suffered from the tigerishness of relations. On the contrary they have been uniformly kind to me—not only my own family, but my wife's family too. Her relations are as the sands of a fairly large seashore, and amongst them there are several very distinguished people. I would like to name them, but dare not suppose that the citation would be of interest to anybody but ourselves. Yet I must make an exception for one person, because my wife was so proud of her relationship to him, as a very great and good man. This was Lord



Roberts. He kindly put my son down for the Irish Guards. It was a compliment of which we could not, however, further avail ourselves.

Now having made an exception, I cannot refrain from making another, in order to say a word about two pretty cousins of my own. These were Ethel Muloch and Enid Muloch. Ethel in due course became Mrs. Claude Beddington, while Enid married Sir Harold Nutting. These two sisters in appearance and in character too form a strange contrast. Ethel has dark hair, an olive complexion with glowing colour beneath the smooth skin, and plays the piano as well as a professional. Enid has lovely fair hair, blue eyes, a complexion of milk and roses, and she is an accomplished violinist. Ethel Beddington has written an amusing book about society, and is very well known in the worlds that she describes so cleverly. Harold Nutting, Enid's husband, is Master of the Quorn Hounds, a charming fellow and deservedly popular. They live in the middle of Leicestershire at Quenby Hall, a noble example of Elizabethan domestic architecture, and are lavishly hospitable, and yet, for the most part, in a homely, unostentatious manner that does them great credit.



## NO WRITING ON THE WALL

IN 1912 and 1913 I was again studying the East End of London in order to obtain local colouring for use in my book *The Mirror and the Lamp*. At an earlier date I had been a frequent visitor to the world that began soon after one passes Aldgate Railway Station, and I wandered solitary and absorbed through every province of it, not so much exploring as making myself at home there. At that time I was in close touch with the Police, but now all links were broken and I had lost the aid of a particular inspector, who became a real friend.

My Inspector Humphreys gave me very valuable hints for unescorted rambles as well as choice information about localities. He told me that I must wear old clothes and not appear grand—grandness being deduced by observers from a watch chain, a tie-pin, or even a new umbrella. In the bad streets, he said, it was never advisable to retrace one's steps ; one should walk straight through without lingering, and onward to the next street. For the inhabitants are addicted to suspicion and easily upset. By coming back one might make them fancy that they were being watched and specially noted. This would get on their nerves, and they might be really unpleasant about it. He thought, however, that on the whole the only danger of my being molested or having a gang set upon me was that I looked like a policeman out of uniform. Absurdly, perhaps, I took this as a great compliment and was much gratified by it. It seemed to imply a notion of good stature and bearing, above all of respectability.

Let me say at once that in all the time I knew the East End I encountered nothing but civility and kindness.



There was an evening club at Bethnal Green, admission to which was a great privilege. Claud Heneage obtained this for me. He had been for long the principal patron of this club, and all who attended it seemed to be devoted to him. Certainly he deserved their affection.

Among the interesting people that I met at the Club were one or two youngish men who had already done time, a professional pugilist, and one perfectly charming old man who had recently been brought into the religious fold, and was extremely happy in it. At his present age of seventy or more the whole story of Our Lord had come to him with a glow of complete novelty, and he spoke of it with eager satisfaction, as though discussing something that had occurred quite recently. He sought words of sufficient force to express his abhorrence of the disciple who betrayed.

"Oh, that Judy Scariot! Wasn't he a stinker, sir? Dirty dog—I'd like to pay him out. I would that."

Some of the young men walking back with me to the District Station showed me the scene of a Jack the Ripper murder. It happened in a short road leading out of the main thoroughfare, at a spot not more than fifty yards down the road. And yet although there were several lamp-posts shedding their light, as it seemed quite near, nothing whatever was seen or heard by passers-by.

The young men took me down the side road and placed me exactly where the murderer had stood with his victim. I could scarcely believe that I was invisible to people in the main thoroughfare, and yet I was, as I verified presently by changing places with one of my companions. The murderous wretch must of course have ascertained for himself that he would be safe from observation, at no greater distance, and he made the distance as short as possible because there might have been difficulty in luring the woman any further.

I think it was at Claud Heneage's club that I met a youthful curate who was good enough personally to conduct me on an evening's stroll. He told me that his parish was the largest, poorest, and worst in the entire district. Wandering together, we went presently into a



street where conditions certainly seemed better. I find among the old notes for my book *The Mirror and the Lamp* one from which I now draw :

"We walked up the street, all among the stalls, and I noticed a brightness and gaiety that came as a great relief. The shops seemed much better than any I had yet seen, the people better clothed, healthier, and more like men and women anywhere else. Respectable mothers of families put their purchases in perambulators and smiled at wide-eyed babies, girls and young men walked together as if they were engaged couples, and a soldier in uniform carried a jolly little chap on his neck to see the fun."

"We have got beyond the boundary of St. D——'s," said Mr. Smith. "This is not in our parish. But as soon as we cross the water we shall be back again."

We turned out of the street, left the cheerfulness of this more fortunate parish, and passing through an alley, came to a footbridge over a canal. In this open space one could look about one, and I saw with surprise that the moon had risen and was shining palely and sadly in the mist of a wild cloud-swept sky. There was moonlight on the water, the mud banks, and the slate roofs of lean-to sheds.

We crossed the footbridge, went under a railway arch, and entered a street that ran parallel with the canal.

"Now we are back in St. D——'s," said Mr. Smith, whispering ; "in the very worst part. Criminals, really bad class here. Gangs only waiting to bash any stranger—rob him, kill him, chuck his dead body in the canal." I suspected that he was indulging in a little exaggeration for picturesqueness or perhaps trying to do the famous fat boy trick and make my flesh creep.

But truly it was terrible ; oppressing the imagination, making one not timorous but appalled. The streets were straight, set very close together, and over the low roofs the interminable brick viaduct threw its shadow by day and made the night darker. There seemed to be scarcely



any street lamps ; the houses, with windows all tight-shut and black as the walls, gave only a gleam here and there from an open doorway ; so that but for the moonlight, it would have been like a cold, evil-smelling cavern—like some labyrinth underground, like a deep-buried inferno where one dreaded but could not guard against chance contact with the dwellers in darkness.

Yet one almost wished that the moon would not shine ; for all that its rays showed was so ugly, so vile, so fantastically sinister. One saw, as if sketched in grey and silver on black paper, small courts that issued out of the street at intervals—narrow irregularly shaped openings with shanties rather than houses on either side, seeming like the assemblage of roofed shelters where poultry would be kept and not human beings ; and one knew that just beyond the bottom of some of the courts, divided from them by crazy rails, if divided at all, there was the deep fosse of the canal with its black slimy flood ready to hide every secret. The air, although impregnated with unpleasant odours, seemed every moment to grow colder and thinner, as if the breath of famine had long since exhausted its warmth and sustaining virtues. And an extraordinary lifeless silence reigned over everything.

Another friend took me to the London Hospital and introduced me to Lord Knutsford, or Sidney Holland, as he was known for so many years. He showed me over his beloved hospital, and truly the London is a very noble and impressive institution. Knutsford impressed me, too, and immediately, as something very big and fine. He was handsome, frank, strongly although not heavily built. A man with an athletic frame, a big mind, and a tender heart. In the Nurses' Home, which he showed me with particular pride, there was not any detail too small or finicking for close attention. He was altogether thorough. He would go outside and address a large meeting at a street corner if his voice was wanted, and at the common music-halls or shows, if the audience were challenged to provide a champion to have



three rounds with the local boxing champion, Knutsford would take off his coat and put on the gloves without hesitation. He had never failed, I was told, to acquit himself well in such impromptu bouts. I had all this in my mind once, when a slight incident occurred while I was with him. He and I were walking along the Commercial Road when we heard yells and shouting. Once long before this I had been startled by similar shouts in Covent Garden, and I could not think what was the matter with the Market to occasion such an uproar. Then I saw that it was a mouse running for its life. "Look! There he goes!" They threw things at it—their hats, their baskets. The terrified mouse, dodging from side to side, finally ran down the middle of the roadway towards the Strand. I did not see the end of the chase, but I had seen enough to make me feel pity for mice and contempt for men. Now, in the Commercial Road, Knutsford and I saw something very similar in character to the mouse hunt. Cries of "Stop her! Stop her! Stop thief! Thief! There she goes! Don't let her pass!" It was a poor white-faced, undernourished young woman who had stolen something from one of those counters that display their goods outside the shops. The thief had at once been discovered by the shop girl in charge, who immediately instituted the pursuit. The two of them went by us—the culprit white, despairing, breathing fast, hatless, with hair streaming, terror in her eyes, and the shop girl gaining on her, coming almost at her heels. We stood looking after them. They soon disappeared among the excited people. Then presently they returned, with the shop girl exultant, and the thief firmly held between two stalwart policemen. I felt it to be a pitiful sight. About to say so, I turned to Knutsford, and found that he was leaning for support against the brickwork pier of a shop wall, if not on the point of collapsing, at any rate most obviously feeling sick and faint. In spite of his manliness and vigour, the hatefulness of the little scene, its brutality and mercilessness, had filled him with so great a compassion that it proved nearly overwhelming. Com-



passion, I think, was Knutsford's most potent emotion, and the one that formed a stimulus to all his actions. His devotion to the London Hospital, together with the life-work he gave to it, may, I suppose, be directly traced to that emotion.

Our friendship always continued, although much to my regret I saw him but very occasionally. He used to write me many letters. From one of these—a long letter about my latest book—I quote a passage, as bearing on what I have just been relating. “Do you know anything about the life of servants? No book has ever been written about them except *Esther Waters*. And yet there is a real mission for you to make employers consider their servants more. Very little is done for them—perfection is expected. Their rooms in London are not fit to lodge dogs in. There is a grand chance for any man like yourself with a wonderful gift of writing to describe the life of some handmaid, bullied by upper servants, uncared for by her mistress, etc. etc.”

All at once I discovered a centre of peacefulness and beauty deep in the East End.

Mrs. Green, the wife of the Rector of Limehouse, wrote and asked me to visit her, reminding me that we were very old friends. I felt sure she was mistaken until she told me her maiden name. Then I remembered excellently well. She was Edith Ramsay who came to us at Richmond as a very elegant and handsome girl of fourteen or fifteen, brought to us by her mother. Mrs. Ramsay, a widow, lived with her brother, who was an engineer holding an important command at Woolwich Arsenal, and, I believe, enjoying the use of a house within the boundaries of the Arsenal. He had gathered fame by inventing and creating an eighty-ton gun. Everybody talked of the deadly monster. Eighty tons! Would you believe it? “See this picture of the eighty-ton gun.”

Mr. Green, the rector, was a delightful person, priest-like, yet very human. Edith was lovely to look at still, although the mother of adolescent children, and with



features refined and expression ennobled by many years of a lofty, unselfish life. They both invited me to go to them sometimes for long week-ends.

Words fail me to describe the unexpectedness of the Rectory and its consequent attractions. It was a comfortable, pleasant old house, such as one might find deep in the country, although, in fact, the Commercial Road—busy and traffic-laden—flowed close past its gates. The fine old church stood nearby, and it had a sheltered garden of its own. Near to it also there was the very picturesque dock of the (Regent) Canal, giving one glimpses of masts and coloured sails.

I was happy there. I slept like a top in my prettily furnished bedroom, and woke early, light-hearted and cheerful. Standing at the open window I drew deep breaths of the strong pure air, an air coming from the open sea, and much stronger and more invigorating than is obtainable further west.

Sunday morning was especially agreeable. I went out before breakfast, quite early, while my good hosts were at a service in the church, and strolled down towards the river, through those lanes of warehouses and queer old buildings that Dickens once described. The whole neighbourhood seemed to be still sleeping. I scarcely met a soul out and about.

Again I find entries in my old note-books.

As I reached the wide glittering expanse of Limehouse Reach, I felt again in more generous doses the splendid sea-borne air. The water made a gentle lapping sound against the woodwork of the stage on which I stood. Seagulls soared and turned—now high, now low. I remember as I looked towards Tower Bridge thinking of all that lay beyond it on the other side. One might take the line of the Bridge extended in both directions as symbolic boundary between two worlds—the grand small world of pride and pomp and the immense world of unrecognised pain and unrewarded toil. Patches of misery there were of course beyond the line to the south of the water, but the great division between distress and ease was that of east and west. In thought one could



pass the line and follow the flooding river beneath bridge after bridge, by the now silent part of the city, by the Temple, New Scotland Yard, Whitehall, the Houses of Parliament, to the black-walled palace of ecclesiastical government, and all the way be among the ancient homes of the ruling classes.

Mrs. Green, in the dusk of a warm evening took me through China Town, and we talked to some of the celestials who were lounging outside their doors. They and their neighbourhood seemed to be quite uninteresting.

Two or three of Mr. Green's curates lived at the Rectory—or at any rate were in and out almost continuously. They were there for the comfortable Sunday supper, and for the long pleasant talk afterwards. Mrs. Green, just as much as the men, perhaps more so, was acquainted with the character of their vast parish. Nowhere in it, of course, were the conditions so bad as those that I have indicated just now. But things were very far still from what they should be. There was an insoluble—or at any rate unsolved—housing problem. In parts the overcrowding was of a grievous nature. Large numbers of dwellings, the property of bad landlords, were really unfit for human habitation. But what was to be done? Rebuilding and slum clearance on any large scale must necessarily be out of the question. The cost would be so prodigious, and one could not possibly ask an already over-burdened people for the money. With an income tax of 1s. 2d. in the pound one had surely reached the limit of direct taxation. But even if one had a choice, it would have been better to leave things alone. And I think we all agreed then that we Britons hated innovations. They were always dangerous. Unchangeableness, the almost impossibility of change in England, gave us our grand sense of stability. Instinct told us that nothing would ever shake old England, and the confidence that we derived from this conviction gave us individual strength. No wonder, then, that every citizen valued it. Moreover, as Mr. Green and his curates told me, there were signs that



improvement was in fact going on without any extraneous interference. The people did not drink so much. They were more orderly and less quarrelsome. Street fights, once so frequent, were now rare. And in other countries much the same kind of growing wisdom and moral uprising was perceptible. The spirit of peacefulness had spread from the citizens to the states.

And this was almost within a year of August 4th, 1914!

In 1914 itself there was still no menace, no cloud in the sky, not even a sign to set people seeking for an interpretation of it as a good or bad omen. As I remember, that sense of stability was very profound. Old England would go on for ever as it was. Nothing could shake it. Events in Ireland (even when the Curragh incident occurred) did not arouse any large interest, and much less any apprehension of a resultant trouble.

During the full twelve months before the catastrophe came upon us, it happened that I went about in the very small section of the community that used to be called "the great world" more than was usual with me. I was scarcely writing at all, and sometimes I thought that I would never write again. I had been monstrously aggrieved by the "banning" by the circulating libraries of my book *The Devil's Garden*, and I had violently protested in the public press. Others jumped in for me or against me. This hubbub sent the book racing through editions into very large sales, and, a little later, in America it had a similar success. But this success disgusted me. It would not do me any good, because nearly all this crowd of new readers, unacquainted with my previous work, were mostly curious, sensation-hunting, or pornographically minded people, and when they did not find what they looked for, they would turn against me, and indeed probably denounce me as a most disappointing author.

Thus I partially resumed some of my old habits of idleness, and drifted rudderless wherever the winds of



chance sent me. In other words, I accepted nearly every social invitation that I received.

Here are two pictures of the period :

On a day in early summer I had lunch with the Prime Minister and Mrs. Asquith at 10, Downing Street. It was a large party, and to a considerable extent a family party, and I remember feeling with pleasure the homely friendly atmosphere that seemed to surround these good and honest people. Mr. Asquith himself was genial, amiable, and with a manner that had a most engaging quality, because of its absolute simplicity. He was as unpretentious in his conversation. He sat beaming on everybody from the head of the big table, but said very little. As I was near to him we talked. In reply to questions of mine he said he loved the golf club to which I belonged at Sudbrook Park, Petersham. I knew that he played there, and he said it was always a treat to him to get a few hours there. He jumped at every opportunity for the treat. I told him then how Ribblesdale and I, playing together as we often did, thought of him, and indeed in a way made use of him. He had gone round the course in ninety strokes, and Ribblesdale said to me : " Let us take Mr. Asquith as bogey, and see if we can hold our own against him." We found, however, that bogey, or the phantom Mr. Asquith, defeated us. This amused him. But he protested, laughing, that his record for the course was much more like a hundred and eighty strokes than ninety.

I had, sitting next to me, Miss Elizabeth Asquith, very young, startlingly clever, and sprightly. Opposite, across the table, there was a cousin of hers, Lady Lovatt. Of all the others I do not remember anyone, except the German governess, who, during the War, would be the occasion of an insane outburst because of her presence in the Prime Minister's house. As I understood, Fraulein was one of those competent, affectionate, valuable persons who are an undiluted blessing in a family. I had an impression that she had been with them for a great number of years, and that she practically ran the house for them. I sympathised both with



her and them, when they were forced by Press clamours to part with her.

In the drawing-room, after luncheon, Mrs. Asquith very graciously made me sit by her on a sofa, and for the first time I heard her talk freely. I felt immediately, as I had felt earlier when Fletcher Moulton talked to me, that I was listening to one of the very cleverest people in existence. Nothing subsequently has made me think that I was wrong. I left Downing Street that day as a place in which the settled feeling was very perceptible. It would be long before anything ruffled the surface of those kindly lives. Mr. Asquith and his Government would jog along comfortably to the end of its term, then perhaps they would be sent back again for another long spell of power.

My second picture is of a luncheon party on a May Sunday at Pembroke Lodge, the home of Georgina, Lady Dudley, in Richmond Park. The low white-walled house stretched its considerable length in the midst of a woodland garden with great trees towering above its roofs. That garden, much cleared and enormously improved by Lady Dudley, was a wilderness, a jungle, when I first saw it. Lady Russell, the widow of the statesman, lived there with her daughter Lady Agatha Russell. It had been occupied for many years before his death by Lord John Russell, and the house thus had a tradition and memories. In one of the sitting-rooms, as the story ran, the treaty after the Crimea War was signed. And there were legends of remarkable foreigners who came there—Louis Philippe—Garibaldi—Cavour—the Shah of Persia. Ribblesdale told me that as a boy of twelve he had met Charles Dickens staying there. But all the record of the great man that had been registered in the boyish mind was that he talked loud and grew very red in the face at dinner.

Lady Dudley had improved the house as well as the garden. The doors, of solid mahogany, came from a dismantled residence in Dublin. On the light-coloured walls hung a few pictures by Winterhalter, and one saw



as a further decoration Wedgwood plaques and vases. There was some beautiful and suitable furniture of the late Georgian period ; and the curtains and carpets were all agreeable to the eye.

Imagine her then, seated at a desk in her own particular sitting-room, or reading in the library—or better still out in the garden that she loved, the famous Lady Dudley, tall, thin, beautiful, her hair already grey, but her face without a sign of age upon it, coming along one of the garden paths through the shadows and the sunlight to welcome arriving guests with a smile. No one else ever had such a smile. It was sunlight, it was wine, a heart-melting mixture of gladness. It made one her servant. And when with the smile she offered both her hands one felt that one was being consecrated to a life-long fidelity.

Ribblesdale and I had had a round of golf down below at Sudbrook, and when we came up the park slope, and unlocking a gate, let ourselves into the grounds the party had assembled. We dropped into vacant places at the luncheon table in a room with windows on two sides and delightful views of foliage and flowers.

There were present, as I remember, Sir Douglas and Lady Dawson, Lady Norreys, Count Albert Mensdorf, Cyril Ward and his attractive wife, Bobby White, and, I think, two pretty young daughters of Lady Cadogan.

After luncheon there was lawn tennis to play or watch, and we had tea out of doors with two or three added guests, including King Manoel, who had come from Richmond for the tennis.

But it was in country houses that one had most of all that feeling of permanence. The comfortable graceful life that had been going on for so long would assuredly continue. More than not being able to foresee, one could not even imagine that we were close to the end of a régime.

Without difficulty, as illustrating this, I evoke three tranquil scenes from the varied picture gallery of memory.



One is of Newtown Anner, the Irish home of the Duchess of St. Albans. My wife had stayed there once or twice, but I now paid my first visit to it. The Duchess, one of the most brilliant and unfailingly charming of women, was a very great friend of ours. We were both immensely fond of her, so that really to be in her company was a pleasure no matter what the environment might be. But Newtown Anner of itself was a very attractive place. Its principal feature was not the house but the garden, to which she had devoted herself for years. By this time she had made of it something really beautiful in the Italian style, with terraces, falls of water, natural pergolas created by festoons of roses hanging from tree to tree. Altogether it was not unlike the Villa Carlotta on the Lake of Como. Yet lest one should feel shut in or oppressed by the luxuriant growth of flowers and foliage, vistas had been cut through the trees and woods, showing one the not very distant mountains. The only thing one could say against those beautiful vistas or avenues was they admitted something of that brooding spirit of melancholy that seems to hang over every Irish landscape. This imagined sadness after I had been walking in the garden for a little while before breakfast used to send me scuffling back to the house, to find in the cosy breakfast-room such cheering realities as hot coffee and rolls.

The house was altogether cheerful. It contained some fine family pictures as well as all her own personal mementoes—boxes full of letters, souvenirs of her father, what not—the things that accumulate in the place that is home.

My fellow-guests numbered only two or three, and these seemed to entertain themselves, or to be entertained by Lady Alix. The Duchess was able to give me most of her time. She took me for some wonderful drives—one that I remember especially over the mountains to Lismore Castle, the Duke of Devonshire's house, situated so finely, high above the river and the bridge. Then in the evenings at Newtown Anner I spent happy hours with her going over her albums and the endless



collection of letters. Not for nothing was she the daughter of Bernal Osborne, famous in his day as the wit of the House of Commons. Her comments and reflections as we turned over these relics of the past were delightfully fresh and amusing. It appeared that everybody of that period had written to her father. She showed me letters from Delane of *The Times*, Thackeray, Palmerston, Jacob Omnium, Disraeli; and gave me a wonderful account of her days before marriage when she lived with her father. It was a careless happy-go-lucky establishment brimming over with hospitality and neighbourliness in which, as she said, guests and everybody else expected to take the will for the deed.

Her sister was Lady Blake, wife of Sir Henry Blake, an ex-governor of Ceylon, and a splendid sort of person.

They very kindly asked me to go on from Newtown Anner to Youghal. They owned Myrtle Grove, once the home of Sir Walter Raleigh. I should have liked to go, but I felt obliged to return to England.

Another scene is from a date later that summer at Stoke Court, the beautiful home of Henry and Dorothy Allhusen. The large week-end parties entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Allhusen had a long-established reputation. My wife and I frequented them, and one had an impression that if one went there often enough one would meet everybody of consequence still alive. It was always a varied if not a heterogeneous company. On Friday evening when one first saw it assembled it looked merely a crowd. By the time, however, that one left on Monday morning there were many familiar faces, and perhaps one had made two or three real friends. Mrs. Allhusen was one of the leave-you-alone hostesses, rightly believing that amidst so many amenities her guests could be trusted to find amusement and occupation, and that she need not fuss over them and push them about. This freedom was valuable. One lolled about on the terrace, strolled in the garden, or if energetic played golf at the Stoke Poges Golf Club a mile away. One was not questioned, one did not have to recount what one had



been doing. If one withdrew from the party altogether, one was not missed. I did this on one or two occasions, putting in a day's work at scribbling in my room.

Among people at Stoke at different times were Lord Peel, Mr. Winston Churchill, Lady Russell, Mr. E. F. Benson, Mr. A. E. W. Mason, Mrs. Edith Wharton, Miss Irene Vanbrugh, Mr. Henry Ainley. I think it was at Stoke that I first met Willie Elliot ; and dear Holman Clark, who was speedily adopted, and consented to his adoption, by all my family. At Stoke, too, I first made acquaintance with Major Robert White—"Bobby White" as he was entitled almost universally. Bobby and I soon were very great friends, as close and affectionate friends as is possible with men who do not meet until middle life. So to speak, we were brothers who had been brought up at a distance from each other. Anyhow the bond was strong enough to hold us together tightly till death snapped it.

In June I spent a few days with Lord Curzon of Kedleston at Hackwood. As "a place", in the meaning given to the word by auctioneers, Hackwood was far grander than Stoke or Newtown Anner. It had an impressive fore-court and entrance with steps and a colonnade. Moreover the internal or household routine had a good deal of state. The rooms on the ground floor were spacious and lofty. A flat garden, formal in design, had a wood with a statue beside it, and the splendid park, with noble trees and many undulations, lay widely stretching in front of it. From a certain point of the garden, close above its containing wall, one drove off for the first hole of the private golf course.

I knew Curzon only in private life and had not known him during any great number of years. But I truly liked him, and I was also obliged to him. For, having gone out of his way to make my acquaintance, he showed me a quite unusual hospitality and kindness—kindness that to my regret I never had a chance of repaying to the smallest degree.

I found him inconceivably different from the Curzon



that I might have imagined, the proud and austere man of public affairs, the autocrat and tyrant as described in popular legend. Tradition said that it was impossible to be fond of Curzon, and that indeed he repelled normal affection as being beneath his lofty requirements. He was disloyal, people said, to official assistants and overbearing to subordinates. He cared for nothing and nobody except himself and his own interests.

But I could not see a single trace of the coldness, the arrogance, the sheer disagreeableness that was currently attributed to him in this kindly friendly Curzon taking infinite care of his guests at Hackwood and Carlton House Terrace, all amiability and generous sympathy, forestalling if he could their least wishes. Again, instead of any disregard and repelling of affection, he seemed to seek it with a yearning, almost wistful eagerness. Unquestionably he had often secured it. His old friends were devoted to him, his sisters adored him.

This discrepancy between the man and his reputation has always remained an enigma to me. It would be absurd to ignore the evidence of the many people who served with him and under him. He could not bind men to him. He failed to win any of them as supporters otherwise than paid assistants performing a duty that was never agreeable and often very unpleasant to them. And the failure was caused not by want of tact, but by callous indifference to their susceptibilities. Even his two sympathetic biographers, Lord Zetland and Mr. Nicholson, give their weight to the case against him in this respect.

On the other side, however, there is evidence no less strong to my mind although less voluminous. I think especially of what Miss Curzon, his unmarried sister, told me a little before her death of the love that was borne him by his whole family from childhood onwards. She said that each time he returned to Kedleston as a boy he brought gaiety and happiness with him. He was like sunshine coming into the great house, raising their spirits, warming their hearts, stimulating and invigorating them all.



This seemed to be the natural progenitor of the Curzon with whom I was acquainted, the genial host of Hackwood, who came to my room just before I had finished dressing, bringing me a flower to put in my coat, and after talking gaily for a minute or two going on to another room.

"See! A red rose. To-night all the men will wear red roses and the women white ones. I am putting you next Mrs. X—— at dinner. You'll like her. She's *very* intelligent as well as so nice to look at. Talk to her of anything you please, except nullity suits and stepdaughters."

On one thing his most lenient critics were agreed. That was his pompous manner of speaking. Yet nevertheless in my observation of him the nearest approach to pomposity was no more than a sort of humorous sententiousness, with a careful choice of words, that added point and value to what he was saying.

As an instance. On my first visit to Hackwood after playing golf all the morning I told him at luncheon how much I had admired the really fine park. "Yes," he replied. "My dear Maxwell, I quite agree with you. It is a fine park. I am able to say this because it does not belong to me. Of course, if it were my own, I should have to say 'Nay, nay. A mere rabbit warren.'"

His dignity under his overwhelming disappointment when passed over for the premiership and the loyalty with which he served the government that he had expected to rule were alike more than praiseworthy. Miss Curzon told me that on that day, so poignantly described by a biographer, when he came up to London confident, indeed justifiably certain, that he would be appointed Prime Minister before nightfall, he was absolutely broken-hearted. The ambition of his whole life in the very moment of its realisation was cruelly frustrated. The moment gone would never come again. When, trying to console him, she said something to the effect that the disaster might after all be a blessing in disguise, since his health could never have withstood the strain of Downing Street, he said: "What did my



health matter? I would have given my life ten times over. I would have been Foreign Secretary as well as Prime Minister if it could have helped them."

His guests for the days of which I have spoken included Mr. Arthur Balfour, Lord d'Abernon, the Duchess of Marlborough, Mrs. John Astor, Evan Charteris, Harry Cust, Lord and Lady Wemyss, Lord Revelstoke, Prince and Princess Troubetzkey (who was Amélie Rives, the authoress), and Lady Desborough, Mr. and Mrs. Rochfort McGuire, Lord and Lady Mildmay, and perhaps two or three more.

I listened with much pleasure to the delicate and airy reflections of Evan Charteris, had some very long confidential talks with Harry Cust, and was taken for a delightful afternoon stroll by Lady Wemyss.

The warm hours glided by in a soothing and lazy acceptance. There was no effort, no desire for strenuous exercise. Possibly golf and lawn tennis were played after tea. It was the typical English week-end party of its epoch and its class, in a life like which there could be found nothing else on earth, but so usual that the conditions of such an existence were taken for granted by those who led it, never considered, and scarcely noticed—stately house-fronts, sylvan recesses, tranquil loveliness, sunlit peace, beautiful women and famous men moving with slow footsteps over smooth green lawns and among borders of vivid flowers, moving slowly on towards an inexorable destiny.

This is a letter written by Lord Curzon more than two years later. I quote it because it seems to enforce the point concerning him that I have tried to make.

"MY DEAR MAXWELL.

"I love your cheery and warm-hearted line from the Front, and when I am married and you are safely back I hope once more in altered circo to revive the happy days of old.

"If you are a Colonel I apologise.

"Yours ever,

"CURZON."



Would a naturally priggish person adopt the tone of those few straightforward lines ; could a person irremediably addicted to pompous phraseology have condescended to that popular abbreviation "altered circs?"



## THE WASTED YEARS

AT the outbreak of the War we were all of us, my mother, my wife, and our children, staying at Bexhill at the big hotel.

It is almost unbelievable when one remembers how completely most people failed to recognise anything in the least approaching to the magnitude of the disaster. At Bexhill for two or three days there seemed to be no serious disturbance of ordinary life. The holiday crowd filled the sea front with shiningly contented faces and only in the evenings became spasmodically patriotic, gathering then round the bandstand to sing *God Save the King* and the *Marseillaise*—and the Belgian anthem too if they and the band knew it. Then gradually, as more days passed, there came a feeling of tension, excitement—uplift—a generous fever in the blood. War!

But there was no real war spirit, and certainly no particular enmity against Germany, until the tale of atrocities in Belgium. At our hotel German waiters, Austrian waiters, French cooks, all going to their countries for mobilisation, were alike despatched with gratuities and goodwill. Indeed in one respect there was something like sympathy with our great enemy, for people now quickly said that if we *had* to fight Germany we were going to do it on extraordinarily good terms; and they seemed almost sorry and ashamed that we had such very strong allies. Scarcely fair!

In these circumstances there could be little doubt, as people said, that we had an easy task before us and one that could not last long.

Again I pause in amazement as I recall the stupidity,



the ignorance, the light-hearted folly of those early war days.

No illusions as to a possibly easy victory for the allied cause were harboured by me ; nor any belief that it would be otherwise than a lengthy war. But I confess I was startled by the manifesto of Lord Kitchener in which he spoke of its duration as three years. In regard to its immediate development I ventured to warn my mother and wife on the morning after the British ultimatum expired, that we must anticipate discomfiture in the beginning. Specifically prophesying, I said that by Christmas the Germans would be in Paris, the French at Bordeaux, with us British hanging on to Brest or some other western port. As one knows now, these things ought to have happened, and to this day it is inexplicable why they did not.

From a personal point of view the War made me very uncomfortable, because I at once determined that I must join the Army, and I bitterly regretted my total lack of military training. I had always dreaded the humiliating situation in which any unprepared person might find himself if desirous in a great emergency of striking a blow for his country and not knowing how to strike it, but I had indolently neglected to remedy the defect. Of Bobby White I thought immediately as a person who might be able to help me. I wrote to him, but did not get any answer. I wrote also to Lord Midleton as an ex-War minister and a Territorial potentate. He could not help me, but he said in reply : " You are right to join. We shall need every man." This shows that Lord Midleton was another person looking far ahead.

Immediately also I went to London and made application to the headquarters of two or three Yeomanry Corps. At these places I was politely received, but not encouraged to hope for acceptance. It had occurred to me that a uniform is absolutely essential to soldiering, and so I ordered a field service dress to be made for me as soon as possible. Just now I spoke of ignorant people, but my own ignorance was fathomless in regard to Army



matters. The only two appointments that I could think of were those of aide-de-camp and regimental transport officer, and I knew nothing whatever concerning their real duties. My notion of an A.D.C. as a gallant dashing sort of fellow, good on a horse and beloved of foreign ladies of quality, came from Charles Lever's novels, and the existence of the other officer I had deduced from noticing the string of wagons that seemed usually to follow an infantry battalion on the march. Thus untutored I was quite at sea when the tailor asked what badge of rank he should put on my uniform, and I had to reply feebly that as yet I had not heard what my rank would be. The tailor then gave me a big supply of badges, seeming to fill one of the tunic pockets with stars and crowns, to provide against all contingencies. Since I told him that I should be mounted he advised me to get a pair of field boots.

On this advice I acted there and then, bustling off to Oxford Street and Peel the bootmaker, who always made my riding boots and had my last in working order. From Peel's I went two or three doors further on to other old friends, Champion & Wilton, and from them ordered a military saddle. But their knowledgeable assistant inquired whether I was going on the Staff or would I be a regimental officer, because there were two different kinds of saddle. I avoided a plain answer by putting a question of my own. Which of the two saddles was the best and most comfortable? He said that without doubt it was the Staff saddle. So I ordered that.

I was now ready, enthusiastically ready, to assume the aspect of a soldier at any minute and only craving the right to do so. I continued to apply for employment. I had really ceased to think of my two guilty secrets. These were the facts that I was close upon fifty years of age, about twenty years beyond the then extreme limit for recruits; and that I was almost a cripple.

We had abandoned any idea of further holiday making at Bexhill and had come back to Richmond. There I came into touch again with Bobby White. He had just returned from Brussels, whither he had taken a con-



tingent of Red Cross nurses. On his arrival, in khaki, the people in the Brussels streets had cheered loudly, believing he was the advance guard of the British Army that was coming to defend them: and the poor souls were sadly disappointed when he had to disabuse them of the notion. All those nurses were lost to us as prisoners of war. If Bobby had lingered another day he too would have been lost. He got away only just in time.

Lord Kitchener had now asked him to raise a battalion in the City of London, and Bobby said that I could help. I asked for nothing better. Day after day I devoted our car to the service. Early in the morning I picked up Bobby at Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park, and with gaiety and high spirits off we went to London. On these glitteringly bright August mornings there was an excitement in the air that made everything seem not only strange and unexpected, but largely unreal. One's own preoccupation and seriousness of thought when they checked laughter carried with them a sense of artificiality. One was acting a part in order to keep in accord with the stupendous tension of the world.

One observed that red uniforms were disappearing with only khaki to be seen. At Knightsbridge the Household Cavalry had put away all their fine equipment and completely disguised themselves. Between the barracks and Rotten Row hundreds of sleek well-bred horses stood on picket lines. The reserve regiment was already forming. Trundling wagons of the Army Service Corps encumbered the traffic on the Embankment. Yet otherwise business was still to be carried on as usual. Clerks, male and female, were going to their customary places of employment. Only the immense number of newspapers that whitened omnibuses, trams, and pavements gave evidence of interest or anxiety on the part of the population.

We had our recruiting station at the offices of Messrs. Govett & Sons, Bobby's firm, in Throgmorton Street. Sir David Kinloch had a place for recruits somewhere else. I sat at a big table receiving candidates and enlisting them



as fast as I could. Smith-Bingham, a partner of the firm, was in another room getting the names down more expeditiously. While Bobby walked from room to room talking patriotism.

They loved his talk, these recruits. Certainly they needed no stimulation, but he gave eloquent expression to their own thoughts. They were so delighted too to see a man of his age and importance not being ashamed to show fine sentiment, welcoming the uplift of noble aims, metaphorically rallying at the double to the sound of the bugle's call.

They were such splendid young men physically and mentally—the very cream of English youth. Most of them were applying for commissions, but, rather than wait, they went into the ranks. They said they had been assured that this would not stand against them when officers were being nominated, and we confirmed this pledge of the authorities. I wish I could be sure that in all such cases we proved as good as our word. As examples from the entries that I myself made out, I would cite two or three chartered accountants, a leader writer from *The Times*, a doctor of science ; Delbos, the son of a French professor ; Beevir, President of the Oxford Union ; Oswald Birley, the painter.

At midday we knocked off to have a slight snack that had been provided for us by Lady Dudley and put into the car at Pembroke Lodge. It comprised cold grouse and salad, little home-made rolls, some hothouse fruit, and a bottle of champagne. We made this suffice, and I think we even praised ourselves because neither of us cared what we ate. It was pleasant to feel ready for all the privations of active service. In the same rather self-satisfied spirit we agreed that we had done a good morning's work. Then without delay we got back to it.

We were to recruit a thousand men, but this number rapidly approaching, we obtained permission to go on up to thirteen hundred. We stopped on that so far as our own battalion was concerned, but I believe we enrolled some further numbers for other formations.

Two days later the whole of our thirteen hundred were



inspected and addressed in the Temple Gardens by Lord Roberts. After this they were sworn in at the Tower. And then we marched back with Guards' bands playing us along, and the Lord Mayor, Sir Vansittart Bowater, out on a balcony watching us go by. Proud and happy moments for us and everybody concerned. At Trafalgar Square the battalion was dismissed to re-assemble after another two days and entrain for Colchester, which had been allotted as our training station. I should have mentioned that we had been given Claude Hawker of the Coldstream for Colonel, and Bobby White was to be our Second-in-Command.

Hawker asked me to occupy this pause by going forward to Colchester on a reconnaissance—to gather information and pave the way for improvements in our accommodation, if this appeared to be necessary. I at once recognised that here was my chance. So I went to Colchester in high spirits, and after a really busy day, many hours of which were spent with the Garrison Adjutant, a friendly amiable person, I prepared a report for Hawker. As my very first essay in Army eyewash I cannot but feel that it was creditable.

Using a pompous and antiquated form of address, I said I had the honour to inform Colonel Hawker that the site of our camp at Colchester was airy and salubrious ; that the water supply was all that could be desired, with a pressure sufficient to allow for providing the men with shower baths at the washing places when we made them ; that ample space for the camp was allowed ; that it was planned on the regulation pattern, with two main streets crossing at right angles ; that the tents already standing, together with their floor boards, were almost new ; that they would hold our numbers with nine and ten to a tent ; that certain large square tents had been provided for quartermaster's store, guard-room, sergeants' mess, and so forth ; that at Blank's in the High Street we could hire a large marquee as officers' mess, and, since time did not admit of delay, I had assumed authority to hire this, and it was already being erected ; that blankets would be issued and taken to the camp by



the A.S.C. before our arrival ; that on each of the three days after our arrival clothing would be fitted and issued ; that rifles of the new pattern would be issued to us within a week. This nonsense I wrote out on foolscap paper and delivered to Hawker the same evening. I call it nonsense, because nearly all the statements might have been taken for granted without any anxious inquiries. But Hawker was frankly enraptured with it. He said I simply must have been a soldier either in this life or a previous one. Praise, from such a quarter—A Colonel ! A Guardsman !—was very precious. It brought too the more solid satisfaction that Hawker asked me to go to Colchester with the Battalion on Friday.

On Friday therefore I put on my uniform and joined them at Liverpool Street Station.

Things went smoothly with us at Colchester. Rapidly the Battalion was clothed, and all day long might be seen drilling and marching—every day carrying itself better and looking more soldierlike ; every day, too, showing progress towards fulfilment of the universal desire to keep in step when on the move. In a week one had the feeling that the 10th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers was really an old unit, and that it had been long established in its present situation.

In many ways I was able to make myself useful, and much was promptly put into my hands. I had care of the Battalion funds. I did all the correspondence relating to officers, and much else of an official and semi-official character. My assumption of all this clerical work gave Egerton Warburton of the Scots Guards, our splendid young adjutant, freedom to be out in the open drilling and instructing, and he was particularly grateful for this benefit. I had brought down a couple of horses, and Hawker and I rode about together very happily. I will say here that his kindness to me passed all possible belief. Although we had not known each other till now, we at once became real friends, and it was a friendship that lasted unimpaired until, to my great regret, he died this year. General Hawker never seemed a year older.



Not liking to ride past Bobby and Warburton while they remained on foot, I bought two more horses, mounting the Second-in-Command and the Adjutant, but I intended to be recouped eventually by Government for this outlay.

Of those funds that I mentioned one we called the Lord Mayor's Fund, and I think Sir Vansittart Bowater must have obtained donations for it. Another and lesser fund had a name, but I have forgotten it. The third we called the Lyon Fund, from the name of its founder.

One of the wonderful people in our ranks was Rothschild, a member of the illustrious family, and a friend of his coming down to see him said he would like to give us some money to increase our comfort. He seemed to imply that he would give us as much as we liked to take. Finally we accepted three thousand pounds from this generous Mr. Lyon. We had not the face to take any more.

One morning Hawker told me of a new regulation by which General Officers commanding Brigades were temporarily empowered to appoint officers to commissions without any further formalities. Hawker said that the privilege would probably be withdrawn again directly, and that we had better take advantage of it without delay. So we rode straight across to pay our respects to General Borrodaile—a very kindly friendly Brigade Commander whose acquaintance I had already made—and he immediately did the trick for me. I received a Lieutenant's commission, my Gazette being dated September 3rd. Thus within a month of the beginning of the War I had obtained my wish. I was an Officer in the Regular Army. When for some time I continued to receive notices from the War Office and Territorial Associations to say that my applications could not be considered, I felt proudly amused.

Our officers were as good as our men. Major George Keppel, grand to look at, arrived in characteristic style with a large motor car and two footmen; Major Raymond Boileau, another fine handsome man, was with George in the Norfolk Artillery Militia; Major Ralph



Cobbold, a fine distinguished soldier of the 60th Rifles, explorer and big-game hunter, followed quickly; Major Goulborn, a Grenadier, and Major Maclean were two more of Field rank. Then among junior officers we had Fleming, who had been a militiaman and "something in the City"; Geoffrey Harley, six foot six in height and noble of aspect, a Shropshire landowner, and another big-game hunter and explorer, now just returned from the Kalahari desert; and Fred Russell Roberts, one more big-game hunter, really famous for his exploits: brave as the lions he used to kill, gentle and kind as a child, brimming over with amiability and good fellowship, and possessed of only one failing, a queer sort of sleepiness that attacked him in unexciting hours. He used to get me to sit next to him and wake him up from time to time during military lectures by Bobby or anybody else. Still another of our juniors was Maurice Sharp, affectionately called "Sharp", a clerk in Coutts Bank; very young and nice to see, modest, but never clumsy. He took me under his protection, and taught me any little bits of drill and words of command that I could not do without knowing. In spite of the difference of our ages we became comrades and friends, and have remained so ever since. Of course that association on equal terms with all these juniors, people belonging to a generation that one thought one had lost for ever, was a source of great pleasure. It almost made one feel young again. Robert de Flers and Francis de Croisset have spoken very charmingly of this satisfaction of the elders in their play *Le Retour*. A returned soldier in the play says: "You must remember that in the Army we were all of one family, but more than that we were all of one age, having been born on the same day in August, 1914." To finish the tale of our officers, we had Rickard as Quartermaster, a born soldier who had served from boyhood with the Royal Fusiliers; Shury, a very rich young man belonging to a firm in the printing trade; Bonnet, who is now a flourishing solicitor; Dallas Waters, who has become Permanent Secretary to the Lord Chancellor; Campbell, a Scottish laird, and of course many more. Physically



we were a big lot. One day, ranging up in the ante-room, there were thirteen of us six feet and over. Beginning at the top with Harley, six feet six, Lutyens, six feet five, came next : then there were George Koppel and several more six feet four, Dallas Waters six feet three, and so on downward. I was at the very bottom of the lot, Number 13. But then I was moved up one place, thus escaping from the invidious situation, and became Number 12.

At the first opportunity I went to consult our good friend Doctor Gardiner of Richmond about my great disability. It was the beginning of a miracle for me. He declared without hesitation that he would not only improve the condition of my damaged foot, he would cure it altogether. He said he had cured J. H. Taylor, the famous golf player, who had come to him in despair a few years ago with a foot much worse than mine. Taylor was quite lame, and he saw before him nothing but incapacitation and retirement from professional golf. To be brief, I acted on Gardiner's advice in everything, and gradually had the joy of seeing the bad foot become like the good one. Small bones that had been out of position retired into their proper places. Before the end of the year I could walk quite well, before the end of the War I was a noticeably good walker.

Hawker, I suppose at my request, said that I was to be the Regimental Transport Officer, and men were allotted for me to train, with a sergeant to assist. I set to work as best I could. The trouble was that only two out of the fifty or sixty men had ever had anything to do with horses. I should have to teach them everything from the very beginning. The fact that we had no horses available made riding lessons difficult to organise. I therefore bought some more horses again, trusting to the Government or the Lyon Fund to defray the cost in the end. Soon, too, I was able to borrow some old farm wagons from the Ordnance people, in order to start some driving. From this time onward I worked very hard at my task, and without abandoning anything that I had previously undertaken.

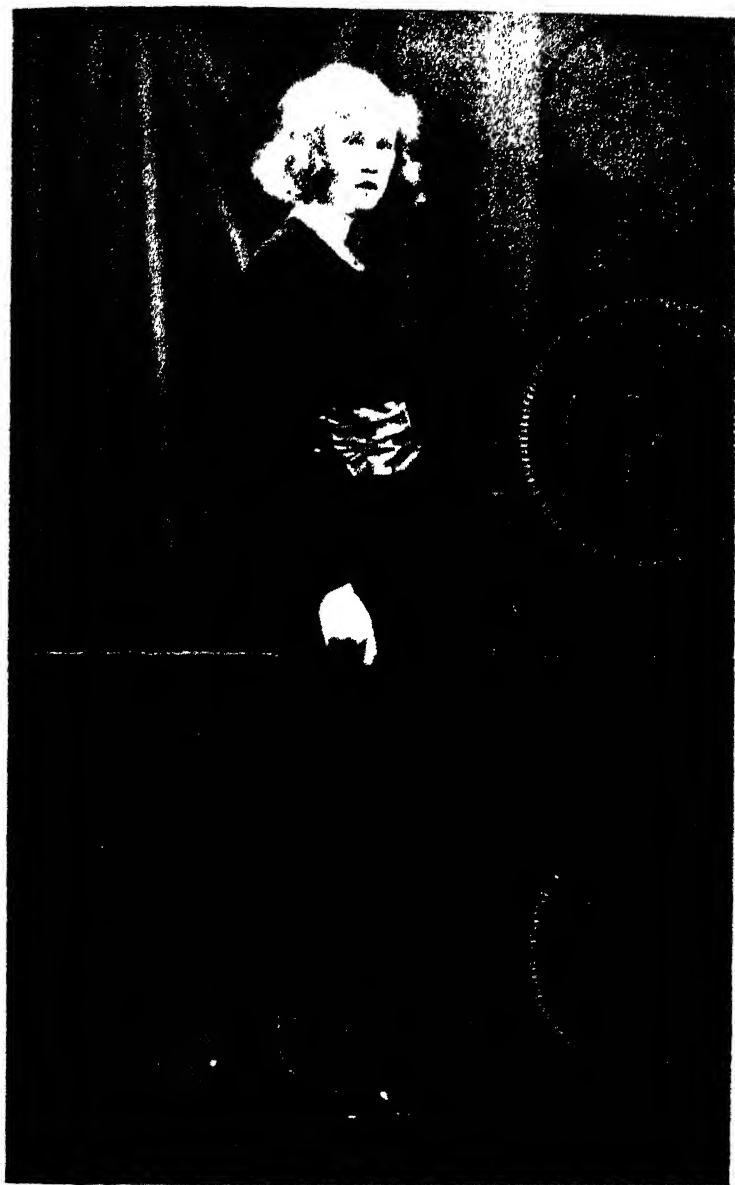


In these circumstances I was always glad to get leave. To refresh myself with a sight of London, to be alone with my mother at her quiet library at Lichfield House. I was anxious about her health. The War had shaken her. She had always had a great love of Belgium, having been there first as a girl, and with nothing but happy associations of that pleasant, that smiling comfortable little country. It was most grievous to her to think of it under the iron heel of the invader. I took leave on any excuse, and would boldly make excuses for it.

Hawker had been in command of Turkish Constabulary before the War, and he owned a house on the Bosphorus. He often felt worried about the fate of this agreeable abode, and wished that he could anyhow obtain some protection for it. All our interests out there, as in other hostile countries, had been taken over by the American diplomatic representatives. I told Hawker that if he would give me two days' leave I would go up to London and see Page, the American Ambassador, and I guaranteed that the house would be all right. I said that Page was a very great friend of mine.

This was considerably over-calling my hand. In fact I had no right to claim Page's friendship in such a manner. I had a great respect for Page, and I knew that he bore a good heart to all literary people. He had been unfailingly kind to me. My wife and I had dined once or twice with him and Mrs. Page, and I think Mrs. Page, whom we liked very much, had once or twice been to see us. That was the extent of the bond. Nevertheless, when presenting my card about eleven o'clock on a sunny October morning at the Embassy in Grosvenor Gardens and being informed that Mr. Page could not possibly see me, I said that was all nonsense. If they told Mr. Page that I wished to see him he would come to me at once. They explained that he was closeted with the French Ambassador, and could not possibly break off the conference. But I stood firm. My card and message were to be taken immediately to Mr. Page. A minute later Mr. Page appeared before me, kindly and smiling, showing no displeasure at my gross intrusion, even





BARBARA







seeming to be pleased to see me. What could he do for me, he asked amiably.

I told him the tale of Hawker's house, and after listening to the whole thing attentively, never cutting me short, he said: "Go back and tell your Colonel that everything humanly possible shall be done to protect his house for him. And I think he will find it all safe when he looks at it again. Now you will excuse me if I say good-bye, because I have the French Ambassador in there with some of his people, and the Belgian Ambassador and another one are coming."

The early months of 1915 were made dreadful to me by the death of my mother. With my grief mingled a most bitter remorse for the separation that I had made her suffer in this the last year of her life. I had vowed never to fail her, and I had broken the greatest of my promises by abandoning her when old and weak and most of all needing the support of my love. Pride and happiness in being a soldier changed to a burden of regret. Yet at the time I joined it had seemed that I had no choice. I was doing the right thing, the only thing. Moreover, because of teaching that I had tried to inculcate in my books, I felt it particularly incumbent on me to set a good example promptly. Now I thought that vainglory, a desire for novelty, a grasping at the chance of adventure, perhaps had largely reduced the singleness of my motives. I thought too that if I had carefully considered how best and most efficiently I might aid the great cause, I should not have run off to regimental duties that anybody could perform, but have remained in London with my pen and my tongue at the service of the Government.

From Colchester we moved to Andover, where we lay in billets. Then, early in April, we went out into camp again—this time on Salisbury Plain. The training had gone on without cessation. It became harder and harder all the time. I think myself that it was quite unnecessarily severe on the men, more especially such



eager willing young people as ours. Further, the authorities seemed to be enforcing a very depressing lesson that, even with the most frenzied efforts, they could never hope to achieve all that would be demanded of them. Their spirits sank perceptibly. Towards the summer they were dull and listless.

I laboured unintermittently with my section, teaching them all I could, but, unluckily, teaching them a good deal that was altogether useless. We had been given mules and horses but no wagons. We received no useful instructions from the higher command. Indeed the little they told us was misleading. Then Claude Hawker wrote to me from France to say that only limbered wagons were being used, and it was all ride-and-drive. From that moment of course I concentrated on practising the postilion method, much regretting the waste of time given to lessons in long-rein work. Looked back at, it seems strange that there should have been such ignorance in high quarters. They all appeared to confuse regimental transport with the Army Service Corps organisation. That of course was the view of it usually taken by civilians. When later I came from France on leave, people said to me: "You're in the Transport, aren't you?"—meaning, "You have a snug and safe job." Here then, once for all, I must tell the world, not only for myself, but on behalf of my numerous confrères. Regimental transport begins where A.S.C. work ends. It is technically known as Front Line Transport. By that is meant that it is an integral part of front line fighting troops. When its battalion goes forward it goes too. No matter how precarious the situation of its battalion may be, it takes to it not only food and water, but ammunition. It carries with the battalion all combative equipment, bombs, machine-guns, signalling lamps. The handiness of the limbered wagon enables it to leave the roads and go across country, and this is what it habitually does. It moves by night, and when its battalion is in the trenches, no night passes on which it is not under fire.

Suddenly when our spirits had reached the lowest



point, we received orders for France. We went to Southampton, and across to Havre. And in every mile of this journey we became happier and easier. In this I am describing what others have confirmed to me as their own experience. It was an immense relief to be done with all that training. Peace sank into our hearts as we approached the War. What lay before us might be very bad, but it could not be so bad as what we were leaving behind. The Germans might kill us but they wouldn't nag at us.

Everything on the other side interested and delighted us—the long straight roads shaded by tall trees, the French Infantry plodding with mountains of luggage on their back, the French old women and young girls, standing at cottage doors and waving their hands to us as we marched along the cobblestones with our band playing proudly ahead of us.

We were put into the line first of all at Armentières. It was a specially chosen quiet sector, and was being used for instructional purposes, and, in fact, we had only one or two casualties while we were there. Then we moved southward to take over from the French, and early in the autumn found ourselves established at Souastre. We considered ourselves very lucky, for we had fallen in love with Souastre at first sight. We came into it down a little hill, and it seemed to smile at us without prompting, out of sheer good-nature and light-heartedness. Its roads opened like the fins of a star-fish from the white-walled mairie; it looked cleaner, better built than any other village; it showed at a glance, even to our inexperienced eyes, that it was full of incomparable billets.

Two miles further on there had been another charming village, called Foncquevillers; but it was now uninhabited and a mere ruin. After heavy fighting, several bombardments, and losing and regaining of ground, the line had settled down through the outskirts of the once happy place, home of successful tradesmen from Amiens and Doullens. The broken husks of pretty villas or chalets and the crumbled garden walls with the flowers



of creepers still blooming, showed one how snug, contented, well-to-do it must have been. There were good dug-outs and cellars all along the main street ; lower stories of buildings were sufficiently intact for cook-houses ; the trenches themselves were commodious and comfortable. In the apple orchards, where batteries of guns lay hidden, the fruit was ripening nicely ; in the front line the periscopes showed one a pleasant undulating country with the nearest slope sloping the right way ; now and then a German shell droned high and lazy in the bright warm air ; and the quack-quack of machine-guns had the sound of waterfowl busy and happy in an unseen marsh.

Towards the end of September, while out of the line and enjoying Souastre and its omelettes, we were moved suddenly. Battle-fighting was imminent ; and the brigade would be in reserve, supporting the French. Arrived at the appointed place, we lay in orchards on the edge of a village, screened from the open country by high trees. We lay there three nights and days, hearing sounds and seeing sights. At first our orders were to be ready to move at any moment ; then it was in twenty minutes, then in half an hour, then an hour. When it came to half an hour we took the harness off the mules, and at an hour warning we let the men go back to the village estaminets to get a drink, while officers with field glasses walked out cautiously along the sunk road to look at the battle.

It was all fresh and new and wonderful. The first night torrential rain fell, making black soup of our orchard beds ; but next day and the day after the sun shone warm and brilliant in the high clear sky. In front of one was the wide expanse of gentle undulating country, all bathed in the yellow autumn sunlight, dotted here and there with little woods, but not a human habitation, not a sign of human life visible. Nevertheless, as we knew, each wood was another fringe of trees like this one, hiding another village ; only we didn't quite know which villages were held by the Germans and which were our villages. Just over all the villages



puffs of smoke disclosed the shell-benches, and the guns boomed cheerily: *ou va-t-on* was heard, and the shells belonged to win it. When the firing ceased, however, we could see a church spire rising above the horizon, and two of the wounded men came. They were French soldiers, moreover, gave a shout, and came in, and the soldiers were spared to go and work.

Officers returning from their reconnaissance, the road had seen more to fight, left glasses, and they talked excitedly. "C'est une belle affaire! C'est la plus grande bataille de l'histoire!" Along the same road French transport wagons, paths or engineers, artillery limbers were going forward nearly all day. The road was sunk between banks, out of the ordinary, but in the open not a cat-shaved, until—until, sending a thrill and the muddy orchards where we lay, the French cavalry came in a view.

Out they came, extending into long lines, jogging steadily forward across the open, thousands and thousands of them, as it seemed. Their arms flashed in the sunlight, the red and blue of the uniforms lit up the whole scene; they were dressed in the grand old style, possibly not with cuirasses, but with plumes to their helmets; and as they rode proudly forward they made you feel it was 1870 again, or longer ago than that. It was the last time they were ever seen like this in the antique garb. We lined the edge of our orchards and watched the inspiring sight.

A French officer passing on the road, by the orchard gates, stopped to tell us the good news.

"Il paraît que la ligne est percée, et on va charger."

And he and his orderly cantered on, to share in the fun.

But at dusk the cavalry came back along the road, still trim and clean, and it chanced that the same French officer spoke to us again.

"Non, il paraît que la ligne n'était pas percée, et on n'a pu charger."

But it had been pierced elsewhere. We heard that our own Household Cavalry and the rest were pouring



through further north. It was a great success. Only no one knew anything for certain, and one pined for the *Daily Mail* and the *Evening News*. On the fourth day the brigade marched away, to billets ; we received the English newspapers, and, so to speak, one got one's bearings.

This was the Battle of Loos.

The men writing home said proudly : " We were at the Battle of Loos, in support of the French, but never called on."

We went back to Souastre and settled to a routine that lasted through the winter. The battalion was ten days in the line at Foncquevillers and ten days in rest at Souastre. There were route marches to harden men's feet, still with our old band blowing and banging ahead of us. Football and other games were arranged. Colonel White, our commanding officer, became more and more popular. Soon the men really loved him. We were immensely pleased too with our Brigade Commander, General Reginald Barnes. Linton, the Brigade Major, and Sherston, the Staff Captain, were always ready aids. Our padre, the Rev. Edge-Partington, Wilson, our medical officer, and Rickard, our quartermaster, helped to make life pleasant. I myself had a completely perfect billet over the estaminet in the central square. In it I was able to dispense a modest but valued hospitality. Bobby White liked nothing better than to come and dine with me alone, when my servant, who had become an excellent cook, gave us a little strong soup, a roast chicken, and an omelette. With curtains drawn and a wood fire burning Bobby and I sat there after dinner, talking of Shakespeare and the musical glasses, the War forgetting, by the War forgot. There were casualties of course, but still not very many. The little rivulet of blood had begun to flow, and nothing now would stop it. One knew that splendid young officers were doomed. Men here and there were already being blown to pieces by shells, killed by rifle or machine-gun fire while wiring, patrolling, digging, or going to and fro. Illusions as to the glory of



war were fading fast. Fatigue was heavy, weariness proved a quick growth. I looked at my men sometimes with the feeling of a father for his young innocent children. It will not, I hope, sound mawkish if I say that I had developed a very strong affection for my lot. Indeed I think one would have to be fairly stony-hearted not to feel moved in some such fashion when one looks at the men under one's command lying on the ground at night, and hears their cheerful affirmative voices when one asked them if they were all right.

In relation to this period I venture to quote a contribution that I subsequently sent to a newspaper as response to an invitation to take part in a "Symposium" about my happiest Christmas.

I think that the Christmas I look back on as my happiest ought perhaps to have been my most miserable, because I was separated from home and family, from all that I love best. It was in a French village during the War, about two miles from the enemy's lines. The battalion had the good fortune to be out of the trenches, "in support", as it was called. But the Higher Command thought that the Germans might choose Christmas day for an attack in the hope of catching us napping, and thus we had to be prepared to move forward at any moment of the day. Nevertheless and notwithstanding, we thoroughly enjoyed it. We had a Christmas tree and presents for the children of the village; Company dinners with English turkeys and sausages at which we officers stood up and made speeches and drank toasts; and later our own mess dinners, and further speeches (sitting) and more toasts. We cracked old jokes and rather stale walnuts, told tales that were not new to Noah, confessed with the pride that apes humility that we took no credit for it, but our battalion was the best in the Army.

Very late at night I went my rounds, answering the sentries' challenges by saying I was a friend and hearing in reply that all was well. The big guns boomed, the big shells burst; the fire of machine-guns rattled like bony fingers drumming on the lid of a coffin: the



German flares lit up the sky with a pallid sinister light that had never been on land or sea ; motor ambulances, unlit, unheralded, dangerous to meet, flitted by with the wounded and the dying—but in the frosty air the old Christmas message seemed to come to me, whispering : “ This ugly thing will soon be past, and then again it shall be Peace on earth and goodwill to all men.”

“ Who goes there ? ” said the sentry sharply, out of the darkness.

“ Friend.”

“ Pass friend. All’s well.”

Some time in this spring we had our regimental band torn from us. Of course a full regimental band on active service was strictly against all rules, and its existence became increasingly difficult to conceal. The pretence of making a possible description of it as composed of batmen, extra signallers, attached men, and so forth became too thin, with the noisy thing itself so patently in evidence blaring along the country roads, and playing afternoon concerts in the village squares. Moreover it made other units envious. The question was repeatedly asked why in this as in one or two other matters the 10th battalion of the Royal Fusiliers appeared to be a specially privileged corps. Suddenly then the Division took it from us, and it was known henceforth as the Divisional Band. I was not myself sorry to see it go, because though I had not a great deal to do for them, nevertheless they had given me some little trouble about their pay and allowances. Now I was free of it. Then imagine my feelings when after a little while I read in Divisional Orders : “ Captain Maxwell will take command of the Divisional Band, and will attend to all applications for its services.”

I must digress here to say how enormously struck I was when I first became acquainted with that purely Army manner of issuing orders. “ The battalion will march at 6 a.m.” “ Three officers of such and such a battalion will report at the Bombing School, Amiens.” When it



came to one's own case it thrilled one to the core. I well remember my own thrill each time that I read it. "Captain Maxwell will take charge of the route of the Brigade march, and allot positions for the midday bivouac." I remember, too, there was a sense of queer-ness, fantasticalness, so that I found myself thinking: "But will Captain Maxwell do it? How good of him! What a fellow he must be!"

To return to the band. General Gleichen summoned me to his headquarters at Pas and gave me instructions. I was to attend to the pay and bulleting of the band, and also look after a G.S. wagon with driver and horses which was allotted to me for carrying the band instruments. I was to make out a weekly programme of music, which should be published in Divisional Orders. And I was to buy from England any music that might reasonably be required by the bandmaster. Still further, I must regularly inspect the instruments, and attend to their repair or replacement. I need only add that I was profoundly ignorant of music, and did not know even the names of more than three or four instruments in the collection.

While we still occupied the Foncquevillers position Fred Russell Roberts won distinction for the Battalion by a deed of gallantry. In command of a raiding party he roused an overwhelmingly strong opposition, and although hit by bullets in several places, he picked up one of the enemy's live bombs and tried to save his men by carrying it to a distance. Before he could throw it from him it exploded, and he was badly knocked about. Anybody else would have been killed two or three times over, but Fred was so much harder than ordinary nails that he survived. While he lay at a Field Ambulance, General Gleichen pinned the Military Cross upon his bandaged chest.

About this time or a little later Ralph Cobbold left us to take command of a battalion in another brigade. Francis Popham went with him. Popham, a charming and refined man with delicate taste, later on covered himself in glory as the colonel of still another battalion.



Quite late in life he has become a financial magnate, having been one of the originators of the new fixed Trusts. Frank was always doing something. A few years back he started in the Carlton Club an association of elderly golfers—I think players of over fifty—and this spreading widely has been a very great success.

At the beginning of the summer George Keppel left us, much to our regret. He had proved himself a very stout soldier and a most amiable companion. We were all fond of him. The result of these depletions did not weaken us, it only meant that the companies were now in the command of younger men.

Our belief in ourselves was if possible enhanced because of compliments paid by Lord Kitchener and Sir Douglas Haig, who on different occasions had inspected the Battalion.

We were moved about freely now, taking over again from the French at Bailleulval. In the summer we were in another sector at Berles-aux-Bois, and one night were heavily attacked there. But the battalion stood firm, finally shouting to the Germans to come on and not give up. Casualties were considerable. While out of the trenches we lay at the village of Berles-aux-Bois itself, which was a delightful spot, and still contained some of its inhabitants, although it was situated a little less than a mile from the German front line.

Then, as in a dream when I recall it, we moved down to Albert for the Somme Battle and the tragedy that awaited us. I wish I could adequately describe the scene down there in the opening stages of that most tremendous affair. In books about the War I have never seen any description of it. The important facts are told one, but the external aspect of them is taken for granted.

About Albert the whole district might have been in an African desert, for not a sprig of grass, not a leafy shrub remained, and the dull yellowish clouds of dust that



passed intermittently over everything might have been desert sand. The town itself, with strange oddly-shaped buildings, might well have been an ancient city of the desert. Only as one drew nearer could one see that these castles, temples, and fortresses were nothing but the shattered remnants of very ordinary houses, in which thousands of prosperous and contented people had been living until a little while ago. As always the devastation had struck capriciously. The high tower of the church, for instance, stood uninjured and dominated the main street, but at its summit the large metal statue of the Madonna had been knocked from its erect position and hung out at right angles to the tower wall, as if by a thread, ready to fall at any moment, and only prevented from falling by supernatural intervention.

Far ahead observation balloons were riding unscathed all along the horizon. The high blue sky belonged to us wholly, for the German aeroplanes had been driven out of the air and dared not re-enter it. Our own "planes", soaring at a great height, showed wings that flashed whitely like those of birds. Victory was flying with them. One felt it, one *knew* it. Near to Albert the completeness of our organisation roused wonder and admiration. There was no confusion among the masses of troops assembled and waiting or passing through the town. On the other side of it one was soon among vast ammunition dumps, water-filling points, and so forth. Here too were innumerable batteries in action, the long noses of our five-inch pieces very conspicuous, close to squat howitzers of bigger calibre, with blackened gunners stripped to the waist serving them. From Fricourt in all directions fine new roads had been made. Names of places were displayed on boards in gigantic letters, fantastic names, some of them, invented by ourselves, such as Piccadilly Circus, Death Valley, Brimstone Corner. At cross-roads and turnings there were military police to direct the traffic. With every hundred yards the volume of noise increased. It was such gun-fire as the world had never heard till now. But the Germans were shooting at us blind without observers to guide



them. Nevertheless they took a cruelly heavy toll. The warm July sun shone down upon death. Men were dying in the bright sunshine—easier at least than to die in cold and darkness.

Together with the rest of the Brigade transport we crept slowly forward following our battalions. They were only a little way ahead. But then they vanished from us. The Brigade headquarters disappeared too. We came under the immediate control of the Division, and for several days, I think, we hung on and off to the fringe of Albert.

But my memory fails me in regard to these first days. The dream-like character of the experience continued. The days were immensely long, one was active throughout them, there was little opportunity for sleep, but excitement sustained one. Undoubtedly we took rations to the battalion, but I have not the slightest recollection of this. It must have been quite uneventful.

Our first little bit of business was carrying bombs one morning. With a Divisional Staff officer to show us where, we took the bombs from a dump and loaded them upon our pack mules. We went forward till we were among a system of abandoned trenches. Here the sappers were making bridges or causeways of earth. We used one of them, and as we went over the sappers in the trenches cheered us loudly, because, as they said, these were the first animals to cross the German front line. I felt a glow of pride as I thought of the early days at Colchester, when the men as such innocents first came to me and the mules were fiery untamed beasts that had to be taught everything also. What a long journey we had made since then.

On our way back, having delivered the goods, we halted for a minute by the bomb dump. In that minute it was struck by a shell and exploded. It became like a pile of crackers being let off on the Fifth of November. One of our mules was injured, and I myself was brushed by a bit of shell, a smart little blow but not leaving a scratch, not even tearing my tunic.

The day was still young. I was told by the Staff



officer that at night our battalion would probably be moved farther on to a chalk pit that would be nicely convenient of access. He gave me the map reference and said that in the afternoon I should make a reconnaissance, taking other transport officers and sergeants with me. Leaving Mametz Wood on our right we were to go into a valley and follow the track until it branched. Then we were to take the left branch and go straight on. It was Death Valley or Sausage Valley or Gadfly Valley. I do not really remember its name, but I will call it Death Valley. That name seems quite suitable for it.

At the appointed time I met my confrères and their sergeants, and led them upon a little tour of exploration. Death Valley was a narrow barren ugly place, and this afternoon it was rendered peculiarly uninviting by the persistent shell-fire that assailed it. Shells burst ahead of us, behind us, on each side of us. There was something sinister in being shot at by people who could not see us, but who kept banging away just on the chance of getting us. And it was a good chance too.

The shelling seemed to grow worse. Again and again we halted. With these hesitations and futile waitings we struggled on until what lay ahead of us was really a barrage. We had not reached the branch of the track, nor was it visible, but I told the party we must give up. To go on would have been suicide. We then hurried from Death Valley with all the speed we could make.

I had hoped that it would be quieter in the evening for the journey with the rations. But it was not. I halted my convoy of limbered wagons beside Mametz Wood and rode forward to have a look at the scene of our afternoon walk. It was frightful. Really there is no other word. In the darkness of night it was a place of fear and horror. There was a wagon on fire, dead horses, other wagons that had been burnt out and showed only a red glowing framework, and a little way on dead bodies of men close to the track; and shells were bursting in the whole length of the valley. A flash of flame, a



cloud of white steam, a fountain of earth, as one deafening explosion followed another. The noise stupefied one. It made one feel as if being hit on the head with a huge pillow.

I sat upon my horse staring downward, and very soon understood that the view would not get any nicer by looking at it.

So then I hurried back to my people and we started. I rode a hundred yards ahead and told them to keep that distance behind me. Half-way down the slope from the wood I signalled to them to go at the double, and we cantered briskly down the incline and a little faster along the flat floor of the valley. Were we going to do it—to get through without an accident? To this day I do not know how we escaped disaster. I looked about me with anxious eyes, and presently realised to my inexpressible relief that we had arrived at the branching of the track.

After that it was easier. The shelling seemed to be passing over us. Unhindered we found the chalk-pit, where we were met by cheerful welcoming quarter-master-sergeants from the companies, and the carriers. We returned as we had come, but through a valley that seemed now to have lost much of its ugliness. Again, and as I thought with good reason, I felt proud of my section and the way it was doing its work.

We made this journey for several consecutive nights, and then there was another move. Our Transport was established on the wide open plain between Albert and the woodlands, and thanks to the continuous fine weather we were quite comfortable there. The padre, Canon Edge-Partington, was there, and he and I sheltered beneath a wagon cover. We fed and slept under it. Other people on the transport lines were Rickard, the quartermaster, and Clements, his fine sergeant, the sergeant-major, and, I think, the second-in-command, with a few other officers who were being kept in reserve for use at any minute. I was fully occupied, and the necessary work grew rather than lessened. One day I received a message telling me that I was appointed



Brigade Transport Officer, and was to take over the duties at once. Thenceforth I did all that was wanted for the Brigade, as well as for my own battalion.

In moments of leisure the padre was a splendid companion. No words could exaggerate the extent of his goodness and tolerance. Although caring nothing himself for alcohol, but seeing that I was put about for want of my drink, he trudged into Albert through the miles of dust and glare, and came back with a bottle of red wine under each arm, running the gauntlet on the long return journey of the people in Staff cars and on lorries, who smiled and made merry at the sight of a chaplain thus laden.

I cannot remember the exact sequence of events here. I know that the battalion often shifted its position. It was for some time in Mametz Wood. And finally I know it was close to the Germans by High Wood. Also once we were taken completely out of things, put right back into a village behind Albert, and given a few days' respite or breathing space. Then we returned to business.

The battle went raging on, with strange fluctuations when our progress was checked, and also amazing differences in purely local conditions. As an instance of this I think of High Wood. The Germans occupied the eastern half of it, and we the western half of it. We faced each other nose to nose. In the English newspapers of this time the fierce struggle for High Wood was being described almost day by day. The fortune of war ebbed and flowed, as they said, in this violent combat, for the defence was no less resolute than the attack. But in sober truth there was not any struggle. We had come to a standstill or a stalemate, as it seemed, on the spot. We were so close to the enemy that our artillery could not shoot at them for fear of hurting us, and for a similar reason the enemy's artillery was forced to refrain. I asked Linton, our brigade-major, why we didn't turn them out, and he said that this was the last thing that we wanted to do. We were already rather too far forward in relation to the troops on either side of us. If



we pushed ahead now we should put ourselves into an undesirable salient. Our cue was to remain where we were until our neighbours advanced. Then the Germans would automatically retire before us, and we advancing could adjust ourselves to a straightened line. In these circumstances High Wood became the quietest place in Europe. Not a gun was ever fired in it. A cool refreshing silence hung over it.

One morning I went up and wandered with Bobby White up and down our fire trench. It was delightful there, so tranquil, with everybody seeming happy and at ease. Bobby and I had one of the long literary discussions that we always enjoyed—heartily agreeing as to the paramount virtues of Jane Austen as a writer, squabbling a little about Dickens and Thackeray, but coming together again in appreciation of Walter Scott.

But if High Wood was a wonderfully safe place to be in, there was considerable danger in getting there and coming away again. I had some very uncomfortable rides to the locality, more particularly when I was taking up other people. Especially I remember that I had the honour to escort a most gallant and notable soldier in Colonel Ardagh, who was going to take over command of a battalion in our Brigade, the 15th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. We had, I think, one or two nasty shaves. But the Colonel, quite unruffled, smiled at me urbanely, saying, or seeming to say, "Don't apologise. It's not your fault."

A splendid man Colonel Ardagh. Happily soon badly wounded, and so preserved to life.

In this neighbourhood Cartwright, my servant, and I, while on foot together, had what we used to describe as "a very close call." A shell burst close behind us, and knocked us both down upon our faces. In the same moment I felt what seemed like a white-hot flame pass swiftly right up my spine and over my head. I made sure that I was done for, and I thought that if I put my hand behind me it would be to find that the whole of my back had been torn away. Next moment, however,



Cartwright and I staggered to our feet totally uninjured. We had not in any part of us been touched. But a man at a distance of fifty or sixty yards uttered a wail of anguish, and clapped his hands to his stomach. He had been hit although so far from the explosion itself. Cartwright hastened to him, and having tied him up with a bandage, led him away down towards the nearest medical aid post. Meanwhile a solitary gunner had emerged from a quite inadequate shelter, and he addressed me very respectfully, and with a strong north country accent. "May I a'ask, sir, was that the right thing to do—what you did just now—lying down?" I told him that I thought it was a good idea. "You'll forgive me a'asking, sir. It's oot because I know nothing yet. I only coom here last night."

The days passed. How many? I really did not know. But the day came when our battalion moved into position for action. It was told to attack the village of Pozières, and take it at all costs. At the appointed moment it plunged forward eager and gallant, to show at last what it was made of. It was met by murderous machine-gun fire. Wave after wave of it was mown down, and still it drove on. It reached the edge of the village, and even penetrated it, but after a time it was compelled to yield its incomplete hold. Then they withdrew shattered. We had lost half the battalion in a useless and futile attempt that should never have been made. Our men had been set to do an impossible task. It was awful to think of all those gallant lives thrown away.

That night, obeying Brigade orders, I had chosen a place of bivouac on the Usna-Tara Ridge near the high road. There all that remained of the battalion would be brought to us. Between midnight and 2 a.m. we were there expecting them, with the Quartermaster and the Sergeant-Major, the cooks and the hot stew, and the officers' mess cart with some straw on the floor as a bed for our Colonel. They arrived, a dribbling procession, with large intervals, of worn-out men. Five together announced that they were all that survived of A Company. Ten or twelve said that no more



of B Company was left in existence. They believed this to be so, but in fact many more of each company came straggling after them. We asked our questions. Captain Hall? "Wounded, sir." Captain Campbell? "Dead, sir." Captain Shurey? "Dead." Mr. Beavir? "Dead." Captain Sharp? "Wounded, sir." Lieutenants Taylor, Richards, Heathcote, Havilland, Hodding—all dead. A grievous tale. Last of all came dear Bobby White, the commanding officer.

"Oh, my battalion," he moaned. "My splendid battalion! And to think that I had not the luck to get killed too." Then, with an arm round my neck, and his head against my shoulder, he wept most bitterly. As soon as possible we got him down among the straw in the mess cart. And soon he slept. He was, of course, utterly worn out.

Nothing of importance happened to us during the next two months, and we had no more fighting till the Battle of the Ancre in November.

Soon after that cruel and mud-stained success for the allied arms General Barnes, our Brigade Commander, left us to take a Division. Bobby White had already gone to take a Brigade. I felt now very much of a lost dog till Reggie Barnes came to my rescue by asking me to go on with him as an A.D.C. My stable companion, his other A.D.C., would be Lord Redesdale, who had been with General Gleichen.

I hated parting with the men of my section and the battalion, but I was really no longer at home there. I had outlived so many contemporaries.

That autumn I felt very tired, and I think nearly everybody else was in the same condition. Our spirits sank lower than we liked. We had phases in which it was impossible to take a sanguine view of the future. I myself had never built largely on the initial promises of highly placed experts. Even in the gaiety of the early years I had been far from sharing the optimism of the period. I used to discourse at mess to the satisfaction



of nobody there, begging them not to believe in impossible things. I said that no real benefit ever came out of a war or ever would come. War was all evil, and when did good ever come out of evil? It is evil that comes out of evil, and nothing else.

Now I think this opinion had forced itself on everyone. It was not that the uplift had gone. That never left. The unselfish surrender to a very terrible necessity was no less complete. The flame burnt clearly, although not so visibly. But the hopes were so much lessened. Victory would be ours, but the cost would be exorbitant. Nor was there any loss of confidence in our leaders. I remember none of that carping criticism of all generals and staff officers that is often attributed to the Army in France. We believed firmly in Haig. We trusted him absolutely. We followed him blindly. I want to make this point with strength, because in war books such a different story of the universal attitude to Sir Douglas has often been given. In a large number of books subsequently written, both of fiction and history, the picture shown is to me quite unrecognizable. Young men fighting their terrors with alcohol—young men hysterically inveighing against the old men who have hunted and trapped them into occupying their present hideous position—young men going to an unwilling death raving and cursing! And nowhere a hint of nobility or altruism. Such books are, I am sure, written quite honestly, but the authors were too young themselves to take part in the War, and they certainly cannot measure the pain that they cause to parents who have mourned their dead sons as heroes, who did not grudge them to the cause, and as a maxim of consolation have repeated the saying that *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*.

Of course in retrospect it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recover accurately one's state of mind. The thoughts of the present tinge all memories of thoughts in the past. Also there is an invincible tendency when looking back to make things better than they really were. One may say, paraphrasing Pope, that :



"Man never is but always has been blessed." But I believe that by the beginning of 1917 among the bulk of the troops there was a stoical acceptance of adverse facts.

They noted the extent of the destruction, and understood that the devastation of England, although without outward signs, was as great as the devastation of France. They knew that the world could not recover itself quickly, and that no great rewards would be won by victory. They expected that the War would drag on interminably till all the belligerents were utterly exhausted.

Those who died had of course paid the supreme sacrifice. All the rest understood that they too had offered their lives, and after a little further delay the offer might be accepted.

To retain life on cruel terms—blinded, or with some horrible mutilations—was, as many people thought, worse than death. But, on a lower scale, the sacrifice demanded was very great. And it was given so cheerfully by all these thousands and thousands of men. Separation from wife and family, arduous toil, crushing fatigue. But beyond this there was a sacrifice demanded from sensitive intelligent people. The horrible interruption of any intellectual activity. The feeling that one's brain power was necessarily deteriorating and the dread that it could never recover.

And sometimes again there was a material sacrifice of one's whole future. I think of how our Battalion medical officer talked to me of these three irreplaceable years that were gliding away from him, and by their emptiness robbing him of all his original and quite justifiable hope of success in his profession. He ought to have been at his hospital studying hard—every day learning a little more. And instead he was here with no bigger establishment to look after than a lance-corporal, a mule, and a Maltese cart; no bigger practice than the handing out (after sick parade) of Number Nine pills.

Again, I think of the C.R.E. (Commanding Royal Engineers) at a Divisional Headquarters, who talked to



me in 1917 of what ruin the War meant for him. He was about forty, with a wife and children, practising as a civil engineer, and already making at the outbreak of hostilities an apparently assured five thousand pounds a year. But at the end of the War, if he survived, he would find that the whole of his practice had gone. He would be compelled to begin again at the bottom of the ladder, with no reasonable prospect of ever establishing himself again. With these things in one's mind, as well as the horror of battle fighting, when one went home on leave it seemed more than strange, fantastic, inconceivable, to listen to men at home talking at their clubs, or any of the other delightfully comfortable places that they had not been called on to abandon. One was told that dear old Jones in one Government Department, or dear old Brown in another department, was beginning to feel the strain severely. One of these toilers particularly had had an awful week at the office—not able to get back to dinner in Cadogan Gardens till nine o'clock or even later on some nights. Again, most amazing was the way these people spoke about the speeches of our politicians—the Colonial Secretary's speech at Cardiff marked in their opinion a turning-point in the War; the Prime Minister's speech at the Albert Hall had made such a tremendous effect that it would shorten the War by at least a year. One thought of Kipling in the previous war, saying that people go on "killing Kruger with their mouth."

I found existence at a Divisional Headquarters very pleasant; and especially I delighted in the companionship of Reggie Barnes. Every night before we turned in we used to have a long talk together. He had made me his Camp Commandant, and this work, child's play after my previous tasks, was just enough to occupy and amuse me. In the New Year my spirits rose again higher and higher.

One morning I had a kind of experience that, as I found by comparing notes with others, was not unusual. I was entrusted with an errand to Army Corps and I



galloped away in highest spirits, light as air, the kindly winter sunshine on me. Soon my sensations were so extraordinary that I almost asked : " What is the matter with me ? " Then I comprehended that I was happy, flawlessly happy. I understood too that I had completely lost myself. Self was obliterated. If I had not ceased to exist, I was no longer of the slightest account. Under this vast dome of heaven, in the immenseness of the War, I was a thing so small and insignificant, that I really was not worth bothering about.

Then, with a return of personal feeling, I thought if nevertheless it was not wicked of me to be happy during the world agony and while the future of my loved family was in jeopardy. But it was as if deep voices answered : " No, you cannot help, you cannot hinder. Don't worry. Carry on."

I was convinced then, and I still think, that for the highest form of happiness obliteration of self is a necessity. On the other hand, very strangely, there is an entirely contrastive state of mind in which all the happy sensation is derived from an acute consciousness of self. The joy one may then experience sweeps over one in a sudden powerful satisfaction with regard to self and its vividly noted momentary circumstances. I believe that in most men's lives there have been such moments. I think I can recall many in my own life, but I will here set down only two that suggest themselves as I sit musing, pen in hand.

One came to me with a realisation of my good fortune and the wonder of it when I was with General Fanshawe a few months later. The Germans had voluntarily gone back a considerable number of miles, destroying all the country behind them, and our troops were plodding heavily in their wake. General Fanshawe and I rode far forward to find the cavalry, who had been sent in a careful pursuit. In the shattered remains of a farmyard my General dismounted to hold conclave with several other Generals (all I think Brigadiers). He gave me a map to spread out and set, and we identified villages and roads in the country that we were inheriting from



the enemy. I felt then what an amazingly picturesque scene it all made. There was snow upon the ground, clouds of smoke rose from one or two villages that had been set on fire; columns of infantry marching backed black on the snow, our horses and orderlies sheltering beneath a wall that had been part of a farmhouse, our own little group, with tin-hats bent down over the map and then raised, as the distance was scanned; my General with outstretched arm pointing, another General adjusting a field-glass to his eyes—everything seemed to heighten the attractiveness of the picturesque scene. It might have been something painted by Messonier or any other of the great war painters of the past. Then I thought that if a fairy or a magician had shown me this picture and said: "This is the great European War. Do you see the Staff officer with the map among the Generals? That is an aide-de-camp. He is over fifty years of age. He is you, yourself"—I could not have believed of course that fate had such a magnificent generosity in store for me.

The other moment of this kind of realisation and the measurement of it was one afternoon ten years later, when I was riding with my daughter Barbara in Richmond Park—she beside me, but at a little distance, looking so tall and well-balanced on a grey polo pony. And I thought again, suppose this picture had been shown to me. "There! You didn't commit suicide. You did not die a bachelor. This is your daughter—just grown up. And you are well over sixty."

A good deal has been said about the easy life of Generals in châteaux far behind the Front, keeping themselves snug and safe, and never going near the Line where their over-driven troops were being slaughtered. But in my own experience I saw Generals being so much at the Front that complaints were aroused at their too frequent absence for whole days at a time from the transaction of business at Headquarters—while two Divisional Generals under whom I had the honour to serve were killed outright at the Front.



Certainly at the beginning of the month of January we were extremely comfortable in a large well-built château at Bus-en-Artois. But before the month grew old we were moved out into an open camp, with no better shelter than canvas huts. The cold became intense, the temperature falling sometimes below zero, that is with over thirty-two degrees of frost Fahrenheit. It was almost impossible to keep warm at night, no matter how much one wrapped up, and one began to understand what life must be like for Arctic explorers. One morning when my servant Mable had boiled me some water in a kettle for shaving and he poured it out into the canvas basin, it became at once not water but a small round pudding of iridescent ice. In these circumstances General Barnes, who had already shown delicacy, suffered badly from cold. It was impossible to provide him with adequate protection. Soon he fell sick, and very much against his will was taken away, first to a base hospital, and then to England.

Once more I was at a loose end. Major Rowan of the Fifth Army Corps proved the friend in need who is a friend indeed. General Sir E. A. Fanshawe happened to be short of an A.D.C. and Rowan recommended me for the vacant post. I had met General Fanshawe once or twice when he visited our Division, and he most kindly engaged me to go to him temporarily.

With the Fifth Army Corps I had a wonderful time. It was all new and of engrossing interest. When I joined General Fanshawe he had seven Divisions in the Corps. My view of the War opened widely. Whereas in the beginning of the War had been the width of our battalion front, while later on it had extended itself to the front of a whole Division, it was now a front of several Divisions, and we had an intimate knowledge, too, of the front of the Army Corps on each side of us. Moreover one now seemed to be much more in touch with the Higher Command. General Gough, the Army Commander, blew in and out of our headquarters, like a bird too busy to remain long on any perch. Sir Douglas, the Commander-in-Chief, himself appeared there—and, as



I reported in a letter to my wife, I had a very pleasant conversation with him. "He said: 'Good morning.' And I said: 'Good morning, sir.' That was all the conversation, but it was extremely gratifying while it lasted." Both General Boyd and General Montgomery, heads of G. and Q., allowed me to have some insight into the best sort of Staff work.

For General Fanshawe I soon had a very strong respect and regard. He seemed to me a really splendid character—so gallant and staunch, and so simple, so truly without pretension. He was good enough to make a real friend of me, and said that he liked having somebody of my age to whom he could talk freely. We had some very long rides together when the Germans went back in 1917, and often, too, a good long walk. He was a tremendous walker, and in spite of my miraculous cure I was hard put to it sometimes to keep going. Once, I remember, after a whole day spent on foot dodging about in trenches and out of them, over the broken ground of our Line, we walked back a good way, and put in then at a Divisional Headquarters for a cup of tea. While waiting for the car that was to meet us there, and blissfully enjoying the repose and refreshment, I thought that I had really done well in lasting out Fanshawe's energy. But I felt smaller when Fanshawe, having finished his tea, said that I was to take the car, and he would walk home—a matter of seven or eight miles—because he wanted exercise, having had so little in the course of the day.

Again adverting to that subject of stay-behind generals, I was seriously asked by some of his Staff to persuade him to refrain from going so often to the Front Line. With all respect I passed this request on to him. But he waved it away, saying that there was not a single time when he went to the Front Line without his learning something that was useful to him to know. Thus we went often. Sometimes we were suddenly and unexpectedly "hotted up". Once it was by a lively flight of shell-bursts that caught us in the open. We dodged about, then ran, dodged again, ran again, and



finally dropped into the shelter of an old railway cutting, where we took off our steel hats and wiped the perspiration from our brows. I remember that I said while down there that it might be unpatriotic, but I so much rejoiced in the fact that my son was not old enough to take any part in the War. To this General Fanshawe replied genially that if I was unpatriotic, then he was three times more so, because he had three sons and he thought it about all of them.

At this time we were in front of Bullecourt, and there was heavy and protracted fighting there. The men were so tired that they would not bury their dead, and this neglect naturally had unpleasant results. I remember General Fanshawe talking to some officers and men in the kindest manner, urging them for their own comfort as well as from a sense of decency, to do some spade work. I admired this as I listened to his friendly understanding words, and then turning, to avoid observation, tightly held my nose.

I tried to take care of my Corps Commander, but anybody might have thought that he was taking care of me. He wished to save me from trouble and fatigue, and until I asked his servant to keep me informed, he would slip away on horseback at dawn, without anyone in attendance on him. In the same manner, when obliged at night to go down to Army Headquarters, twenty or thirty miles away at Albert, he wanted to make the journey to and fro without any companion. But I told him firmly that this could not be allowed. "Why not?" he said. "Because," I said, "the General commanding an Army Corps really cannot go about alone. You must take me with you, if only for the look of the thing." "Ho, ho!" he said, with his friendly characteristic laugh. "If I thought about the look of the thing I should not have engaged you." Then, having satisfied himself with the jest, he submitted to my importunity.

In June I rejoined General Barnes. With health restored, he came out to command not his old division



but a fresh one. Its headquarters were at an inhabited village in front of Estaires on the Lys. My brother A.D.C. was now "Sainty" Clowes, a well-known and very popular personage. He and I got on well together and much as I disliked leaving Fanshawe it was a treat to be back with Reggie. I do not remember what army we were in, but I know that after a long quiet time we were moved to the Fifth Army and the Ypres Salient.

One knew well from experience that whenever one came under General Gough one was for it. His was the fighting army. It took the lion's share in battle after battle. Its present affair was Passchendaele.

This autumn my fatigue returned and weighed heavily upon me. For the time I felt done for, mentally as well as physically. It was difficult to remember that I had ever been an imaginative writer.

In an old note-book I have found a jotted record of my thoughts in December, 1917. This was immediately after I had heard of my approaching release. I give the extract because it really does contain the thoughts of that date. They are not, as I said so often happens, changed or coloured by subsequent thoughts.

"Dec., 1917. The more I try to think of materials or ideas unconnected with the War, the less easy it becomes. The War not only dominates all one's thoughts, it prevents one from making any scheme of life for the after-war period. It is a complete interruption; all things normal have ceased to be, and therefore there is no basis left for normal thought.

Everything must necessarily wait until the War is over.

"This seems to me especially true in regard to all those who are no longer young.

"Children are of course scarcely touched by the War. Girls and boys fall in love and marry in the midst of the universal chaos.

"One ought to have learnt a lot of psychology,



because it is in abnormal conditions that psychology finds its field for research.

"Personally I did not think at all about such matters. Many people told me they felt what I did—a total incapacity to think.

"Some things did not bear thinking about—the loss of one's friends, the broken hearts at home, the unutterable cruelty of war itself, as one saw it day by day ; and perhaps the voluntary shutting off of the stream of thought in these directions tended to lock it up altogether.

"The callousness (not that this word accurately describes it) with which one came to regard the death of others was complete.

"As to the possibility of one's own death one was callous also, but in quite another manner. I am convinced that most people had a quite unreasoning (and unjustifiable) belief in their own invulnerability. Even when it seems two to one that you will get hit, you feel as if it is ten to one in your favour. Some of this feeling is no doubt due to ignorance, the unaccustomed danger (we noticed that old soldiers of experience were much more careful, where care could be of any avail, than the new soldiers) ; but the greater part of it is merely another manifestation of the egoism that is the very essence and foundation of our existence—the sensation of the ego that is so strong that it produces a confidence in its indestructibility."

At the end of 1917 Reggie Barnes sent me home, on the grounds that my state of health did not justify me in facing another winter out there, that I had made as full an effort as could reasonably be expected from me, and that I ought to be relieved of further obligations. I went back to England contentedly and gratefully. On my last night in France I dined at the headquarters of the Fifth Army with Sir Hubert Gough, Arbuthnot his A.D.C., and General Neil Malcolm, his Chief of Staff. Hubert gave me a most kindly and cheering send-off.



Then early in 1918 I was gazetted out of the Army, the authorities at the War Office having adopted dear Reggie's view that I had fairly done my bit. I had in fact served from August, 1914, and ever since July, 1915, on the Western Front without a single break.



## KENSINGTON GORE

IN which is it better for a writer to live, London or country?

Ruskin said that the only good books are those written in the country. "None worth spending time on, and few that are quite safe to touch, have been written in towns." That was the sort of thing Ruskin used to say, and he probably contradicted it a week later. His bold statements and his beautifully expressed contradictions give much of his charm to Ruskin. This dictum would put out of court all the Elizabethans; Addison, Swift, Fielding, and the Georgian School, and nearly all Victorian writers. It would leave us the Lake School, and a few conspicuous examples of modern times such as Hardy and Meredith—both of whom, however, had lived much in London. I suppose the intellectual stimulation of cities is needed by all artists, as well as the beauty and restfulness of the country. But when you come to consider restfulness and interruption, many of my writing friends have assured me that they find the country more disturbing than the town. In London you get used to the movement and noise—you rarely look out of the window, whereas in that peaceful atmosphere of the country anything that happens seems exciting—such as the sound of the hunter's horn a few fields away, the peculiar baying and barking of dogs when they have found a hedgehog, the clatter of a pony in the milkman's cart. Somebody said that even the blossoming of the first crocus so excited him that it put him off work for a whole morning. Again the country is so catastrophic. Pigs get into the garden. The rain comes through the roof. Chimney stacks are struck by



lightning. Huge limbs of pear trees and cherry trees come down with a crash in every high wind.

In the autumn of 1920, having reluctantly decided to sell Lichfield House, we moved into a flat at Albert Court, Kensington Gore.

There, within the shadow of that great Victorian monument, the Albert Hall, we passed nearly eight happy prosperous years. Life was full of occupation and amusement. Our two children were growing up, and already wonderful companions. Our friends were all round us and newly accessible. They had been very good in coming to us at Richmond, but such visits asked for the sacrifice of the better part of their day. Now the demand upon their time was much easier to satisfy.

Often as I had stayed in London I had never been one of its regular inhabitants till now. I took to it as a fresh and unexplored place. I had the exhilaration of a fresh start, and I thought of what Maupassant says. It is not good to live all one's life in one house.

My wife had the same feeling, a joyous contentment, on finding herself amid new surroundings. She and I were both struck by an unexpected quality of localness in our neighbourhood. The gentry of London leave their neighbours rigidly alone. It is no exaggeration to say that you may live in London for many years without knowing even by sight the people next door. But its humbler residents are far from being so self-contained and so indifferent. They welcome the stranger in their midst. Truly I was amazed by the rapidity with which we were all known at Kensington Gore as local figures. Within a short space of time we could claim acquaintance with the respectable local crossing sweeper, a dear old fellow who carried a license and wore a badge, the milkman, the baker's lad, two workers at the small office, or shop of a builder, the postman on his beat, the people in the post office, the gardener in Hyde Park, and one or two of the mounted police. It was very pleasant to be cheerfully greeted by these kind folk when one issued from one's dwelling. I felt almost more at home than I had ever done at Richmond.



In gay exploratory walks with my daughter Barbara and my son Henry we had much make-believe as well as what they termed "nonsense talk". As an example of the former amusement, coming out of Trevor Square on our way to the Brompton Road and seeing a narrow little street with a few old-fashioned shops, we observed that it might have been an old street in a seaside town. Then we pretended that we were in fact quite near to the sea. The terra-cotta roof of Harrod's Stores showing above intervening houses was the big Esplanade Hotel. Beyond that were public lawns, the motor coaches, the bandstand, while away to the left lay the harbour with its fishing boats and a pleasure steamer. Round the next corner we should get a glimpse of the harbour. But we paused in order to find if the fine sea air could reach us where we stood, and such is the force of imagination, it could. We drew deep breaths of the ozone-laden and invigorating breeze.

On most mornings Barbara and I rode in Hyde Park before breakfast. Henry came with us during the holidays. We obtained good horses from Mr. Smith, who, I really think, mounted half the people in the Row. All his horses had names, and Barbara said that they called out to one another and often made disparaging remarks about their riders. "Hallo, Emperor, who's the fat lady? Like carrying a sack of potatoes, isn't it." . . . "Geraldine, my dear, I hope your silly-faced man doesn't bother you with his spurs." . . . Our hour was from half-past eight to half-past nine. It had its regular frequenters, amongst whom we found and made many friends, while others we only knew by sight. Conspicuous in these were Sir Eric Geddes and King George. His Majesty was nearly always accompanied by Lord Revelstoke.

Lord Revelstoke often rode with us and we both held him in high esteem for his clever and amusing talk. Like his brother, Maurice Baring, witty, his wit was of a different character, devoid of any fantasy, and based rather on his wide knowledge of life and swift understanding of men. He knew, or he had known, all



the great singers and actresses of our time, and he told us most interesting things about Duse, Sarah Bernhardt, Melba, and Calvé. Beyond my pleasure in his conversation, I had solid regard for John Revelstoke, because I knew him to be remarkably kind, considerate to his friends, and never wearying in the service of unfortunate people, whether or not they possessed any claim upon him.

Another person, always welcome, who would jog round with us was Police-Constable Andrews. He had long been stationed in Hyde Park, and had rescued a large number of incompetent ladies and gentlemen on runaway horses. Sometimes we had a pleasant chat with his chief, Sir Percy Laurie, riding through on his way down to Scotland Yard. Also sometimes Sir A. M. Samuel would join us, and once he gave an entertaining account of his book on the Yarmouth herring.

Others who occasionally ranged up beside us were Mr. George Belcher, the artist, Miss Norman (of the Foreign Office), Mr. Williams, Mr. Stillman, all very well known in Rotten Row and outside it, the great Mr. Smith himself, with his amiable daughter. And Lord Crawford and Balcarres generally gave us a hurried nod as he walked swiftly along a pathway beneath the trees.

If instead of riding before breakfast we took a stroll afterwards in the hour from nine-thirty to ten-thirty, we found an entirely different set of riders. Conspicuous then were Sir Frederick Macmillan, Lord Peel, and Lord Dunmore. On foot we several times met Lord Buckmaster, who used to walk down from Porchester Terrace through Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park in his progress to Westminster and the Committee of the Privy Council, on which he sat regularly. Meeting him, we turned back and walked with him to Hyde Park Corner, listening enraptured to his marvellous talk, which flashed about from subject to subject, brilliantly lighting up each. The first time this occurred my children said after we had parted with him, "Who is he, daddy? Surely he must be famous." Thus he impressed



himself, he could not help impressing himself, on old and young alike, although he was utterly unpretentious in manner. To the delight of Barbara and Henry too he told us one morning that the case they were at the time considering had some picturesque details. It concerned the disposition of the Trust Funds of a temple that had been endowed a very long time ago. An Indian Prince wished to set the trust aside; family descendants of the pious endower wished some of its provisions modified; and so on. The interests of many different people were involved, and they all had Counsel to speak for them. Amongst the others was Counsel representing the Gods of the Temple.

Lord Buckmaster's championship of various causes is well known. He was a very strong and persistent advocate for Divorce Reform—a cause which I myself felt very desirous of aiding. To this end I wrote a book called *A Remedy Against Sin*, and was doing another that I called *Spinster of this Parish*. Lord Buckmaster begged me to peg away and to “take off the gloves” in the fight for justice and mercy. I have one or two very interesting letters from him in which he speaks of his views.

The next hour in Hyde Park from eleven-thirty to twelve-thirty, especially on Saturday morning, was crowded with riders, and sometimes Barbara would ride then in order for us to mingle with the throng. One saw at that time actors, like Hugh Wakefield, who happened to be horsemen; actresses, like Miss Fay Compton and Miss Joyce Carey, who do everything well; statesmen like Lord Salisbury; also occasional visitors such as Mr. Somerset Maugham, Mr. P. G. Wodehouse, Mr. A. S. M. Hutchinson, Mr. Nicholas Hannen; and Lord Wright, taking advantage of rare leisure to practise the art in which his wife so greatly excelled.

The late Lord Churchill, enjoying the air on a nice-looking chestnut, after labouring early at the affairs of the Great Western Railway, talked to us, and last but very far from least I sometimes had the pleasure of some talk with Cunninghame Graham, whose beautiful prose



I had always loved. He was a most picturesque figure, riding in the South American style, and looking himself like a Spaniard, looking quite astoundingly young too in spite of his advanced age. He gave us an account of strange episodes, adding reflections of an elevating character, to which we both listened with deep attention. But once he wanted to tell me a story that he considered unsuitable for youthful ears, and irked by Barbara's presence he asked her to ride on alone. Barbara obeyed, cantering away at a smart pace, and, perhaps slightly outraged in her dignity, deserted us altogether.

I wish I could make a list of the friends we had the honour and the pleasure of receiving after we had become Londoners, at luncheon or dinner, usually at the flat but occasionally at the Garrick Club or a restaurant. I know that we had among them those who are habitually described as "prominent people", Lady St. Helier, Dame Madge Kendal, Miss Irene Vanbrugh, Sir Squire Bancroft, Sir George and Lady Arthur, Lord and Lady Charnwood, the Swedish Minister and Madame Palmstierna, Princess Helena Victoria, Princess Marie Louise, Lord Ribblesdale, Lord Meath, and I should be pleased if I were allowed to write a pocket biography of each of them. They were all worthy of admiration for their individual qualities.

Lord Meath, for example! Always a man of noble aspect, he had become almost majestic in old age. The weight of years never bowed his tall frame or dimmed his energy in the practice of his good work. Indeed, despite of white hair, the life in his face and movements, his quick changes of expression, and a smile that had in it at all times benevolence and sometimes a quite boyish mischief, prevented one from thinking of him as old. When one considers his long life of service, and his many successful efforts, the open space movement, the Meath coffee-houses, and Empire Day with its fine implications and teaching, it seems more than surprising that he received so little recognition from the rulers of our land. I should have thought that if ever a man deserved the Order of Merit it was Lord Meath. He was kind enough



to like my wife and me, and I am glad to remember that we saw him fairly often.

Of Army friends I must at least mention General Barnes, and Lady Barnes, his pretty and charming bride, General Lord Edward Gleichen and Lady Edward, Dallas Waters, "Sharp", Russell Roberts, Samazuilh, the deservedly popular Frenchman who acted as liaison officer to our brigade, General Sir Hubert Gough and Lady Gough, and of course General Robert White.

As well as dear Reggie Barnes and General Gleichen, it was the War that had given me General Gough as a friend. We had never met until I saw him dressed in all the power and glory of an Army Commander, and I think gratefully of his kindness in taking notice of so very subordinate a person as myself. Now my children and his were growing up, as it were side by side, as natural friends; and Hubert has always continued to be wonderfully good to my two. About this time we went down to stay with him and Lady Gough at Shere—perhaps the prettiest part of all Surrey. There they had a large and very attractive house, with enough land to keep Hubert occupied as a farmer. He was very much the General who has turned his sword into a ploughshare and developed into the simple country squire. But his temperament was far too active for him to be contented a very long time with the monotonous joys of rusticity. After a few years he and his family returned to London. But wherever he lived, or whatever he did, he maintained the same fine dignity and reserve in regard to the very shabby treatment that he had received after the Retreat in 1918. His vindication and rehabilitation came entirely from others, and were not in the slightest degree brought about by any movement of his own.

Among members of my own craft, but by no means fully completing the list, there were Sir Arthur Pinero (who was my mother's friend before he became mine), Edmund Gosse, Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle, John Drinkwater, Anstey Guthrie, W. J. Locke, Horace Annesley Vachell, Stephen McKenna, A. A. Milne, Michael Sadleir, Ian Hay, Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith,



Arnold Bennett, Clive Holland, Horace Ebleckley, Julian Hall, Lord Gorell, Archibald Marshall, Miss Gertrude Jennings, Lady Russell (Elizabeth), Douglas Sladen—who made me known to many interesting people, notably to Miss Maude Royden and Dr. Elizabeth Sloane-Chesler), Maurice Lanoire, Francis de Croisset, A. S. M. Hutchinson, Mrs. Alec Tweedie, Miss Clemence Dane, Pett Ridge, J. D. Beresford, Alfred Noyes, Mr. John Galsworthy, Hugh Walpole.

Hugh Walpole is so very well known, and to so very many people, that it is more than a work of supererogation to describe him. So I will only say I was fond of him and that he and I had long been on the most easy, friendly footing. I always enjoyed his company, and we had passed some pleasant hours together. The only possible thing that could detract from one's satisfaction in possessing Hugh's cordial friendship is that he grants it to such a lot of other people. Indeed his open and rapidly maturing friendliness is almost childlike in its character. He seems to take one on trust without tests or enquiries. Arnold Bennett said to me once, "Hugh Walpole is a child." I must add to the openness of nature a generous wish to act kindly. Then, taking into consideration this widespread, almost limitless good nature of his, it is most extraordinary that his books should be replete with such hatred and cruelty. My wife ventured to ask him for his own explanation of this curious fact, and, good-natured as ever, he said that if there was any reason, or any sub-conscious guiding influence, it must have been the very great unhappiness that he had suffered for a time during his school-days.

Hugh is full of energy in regard to assembling people, and organising tasks for them. He founds societies in his stride. The Society of Bookmen, the National Book Council, the Book Society were all of his creation.

My favourites among his books are *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill* and *Captives*, both of which seem to me admirable.

I think then of the immense satisfaction of being again with my oldest friends—first of all, Gerald, my



brother, with his pretty wife Muriel, Lord Doneraile (a friend of forty years' standing), Claude Heneage (whom I have known for the same length of time), Dr. Johnstone, and two companions of boyhood in Bill Weigall and Leo Trevor.

Leo was one of the lights of the Beefsteak Club, where Gerald was much liked and valued. Together they shielded me into that select little body of interesting men. Gerald, while continuing to be dramatic critic of *The Daily Mail*, had done hard and unpaid work during the War in the Intelligence Department. He did also two excellent books on the Military Map and Map-making.

I had pleasure also as a Londoner in the more frequent use of my clubs. It was a good walk and a cheerful walk to the Garrick Club through Hyde Park and along Piccadilly, and a better walk still if I was going to the Carlton, because then I could make my route through a corner of Kensington Gardens, through Hyde Park, and through St. James's Park to Pall Mall. That walk in parkland, among trees and flowers, for so long a distance is of course unique in Europe. No other city can boast of such an amenity. The public parks on the Continent are nearly all on the outskirts of the city. We only have our parks right in the middle of our town.

At the Garrick during these post-War years one met the actors—John Hare, Johnstone Forbes-Robertson, and his most agreeable brother Norman Forbes, Bancroft or "Bogey", as his friends were allowed to call him, Seymour Hicks, Holman Clark, Norman McKinnell, Nigel Playfair, Gerald du Maurier—indeed all the big lights of the Stage. The law had many representatives—Charles Gill, Marshall Hall, Curtis Bennett, Lord Buckmaster, Lord Hewart, Sir Dunbar Plunket Barton, Sir Horace Avery, Sir Ernest Wild, Edward Boyd, Perceval Clarke, Chartres Biron, Sir Reginald Poole, Sir Richard Taylor. It was a privilege to find these people and hear them talk of such varied experiences as filled their lives.

There are good reception-rooms at the Garrick, but



its members had developed a queer trick of assembling before luncheon and after it in the hall, which was not a room at all. It was here that the most general conversation occurred. Sometimes Sir Seymour Hicks kept the company almost hysterically laughing at his quips and cranks, and astoundingly clever drolleries. Often, in more sober style, Mr. Harry Higgins was amusing the knot of members gathered round him with his gaily cynical *obiter dicta*.

I should have included Harry among the lawyers. His career always seemed to me noticeably out of the common run. He had been in the Household Cavalry; then—how and why I never knew—he became a solicitor. And presently reviving the opera in England he gave back all its glories to Covent Garden Theatre, and maintained its prestige and success during a good many years. Some accident had injured his vocal chords, so that he was unable to speak in a full voice. But we used to think that the portentous whisper in which he delivered his witticisms added to their effect.

Harry Higgins was sitting in the hall of the Garrick on the morning of Armistice Day, when, a few minutes after eleven, somebody rushed in and said: "They've signed, Harry. The War's over. Isn't it splendid!"

"Yes," whispered Harry. . . . "It will be a great stimulus to recruiting."

A prominent member that I was too late to find at the Garrick was Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree. With all the world I deeply regretted his untimely death. I talked about him to Lady Tree and Viola, because even while their grief was fresh they liked to speak of him.

For Viola Tree I have always had respect as well as affection.

Highly gifted, variedly clever, she has great courage, industry, fortitude. Another merit that she has always possessed is that, in spite of all the cleverness, she has entire freedom from conceit. She is very witty too. And when quite young had a mischievous strain in her sense of fun that no doubt she derived from her father.



But even then, in her extreme youth—and children are proverbially cruel—although her witticisms might be sharp-edged and pointed, they never had a stab of malice in them.

She was a good actress, and has played excellently with Gerald du Maurier, but the experts considered her too tall for ordinary parts. As Ariel in her father's production of *The Tempest* she gave a truly exquisite performance, delighting one with her youthful prettiness and grace, and charming one with a fresh clear voice, that was as musical and natural as a bird's. But then, as she has put on record, her voice was ruined by over-training. And more than a thousand pities. Of late years she has devoted herself to writing and is a very successful journalist.

I first met Viola at one of Lady Dorothy Nevill's luncheon parties, when she was about seventeen or eighteen years of age. Two or three times she came down to ride with me in Richmond Park, going back to Lichfield House afterwards to have a late luncheon with my mother and my wife. Later I became a close friend of Herbert Tree, and his great kindness to me was unfailing. But I am sure that the value he attached to me was based upon my friendship with his adored daughter.

"You like Viola?" he said. "She's marvellous, isn't she? Think what it is to have the privilege of being with her continuously. It is like living beside a rippling stream." And he went on in softened dreamy tones to describe the characteristics of the adjacent stream, telling me how it sparkled in the sunlight, catching every available ray, and how it reflected the moonlight in its tranquil depths; and at all times spread charm and delight on those within reach.

Viola for our hacking mornings rode a big nearly thoroughbred horse—rather a sort of tearing devil, or giving one that impression. I think Viola mischievously encouraged this notion, seeing that I was a little nervous about her. And how should I not be nervous with this priceless treasure in my charge?

She rode quite well, but of course in a fearless slightly unconventional manner. And I know that I begged her



to be careful, putting my position before her, and asking how I should feel if any mischance befell her, and I had to go and face her father with the news.

Then, one morning, when she had been riding a little way behind me, she suddenly swept past and ahead at full gallop, and as she flashed by said, turning her eyes towards me piteously, "I can't stop him!" And on the horse went, tearing away. I galloped after them, but could not catch them. They were too speedy. Ahead lay clumps of trees, beyond these a cross road, and then the park gates. Feeling sick with fear I followed. But to my joy they slackened speed, and presently were altogether stopping. With a grateful but badly fluttered heart, I rode for a little while at Viola's side, and was really unable to speak.

Then she spoke to me, turning her eyes on me again and giving me a smile in which were mingled compunction and sheer mischief.

"I could stop him really. Do you mind?"

I think that the reputation of Tree as a wonderful character actor perhaps robbed him of the praise he ought to have had for the big roles that he created or sustained. He made His Majesty's Theatre the home of Shakespeare and the modern poetic drama, and without thought of profit for himself, poured out money stintlessly in the service of art. Naturally he became the recognised head of the acting profession. His larger hospitalities in that position were on the most lavish scale, and all might hope to enjoy them, while his supper parties in the dome above the theatre were only for the privileged few.

I particularly remember two of these suppers. One he gave in honour of Sarah Bernhardt. At this there were ladies present, including Lady Tree and Viola and my wife.

Another party was for Anatole France, and at this only men attended. I remember that among them were Lord Ribblesdale, full of good talk as usual, H. B. Irving, attractive with his touch of strangeness, H. G. Wells, and A. B. Walkley, the critic of *The Times*, who made a



little speech in French, proposing the guest's health. So far as I could judge he did this in careful and entirely correct French, with a perfect accent. Then he turned some pretty compliments—befitting wreaths to lay at the great writer's feet. Anatole listening smiled, bowed, at what he hoped might be appropriate moments, but, either because of slight deafness or the fact that he was unaccustomed to any intonations except those of his countrymen, he did not seem to understand a word of it.

Then he himself, after a little urging by Tree, rose to speak. He naturally spoke French without difficulty, and did it a little quicker than Mr. Walkey. Looking round for a subject, he turned upon H. G. Wells and gave him some really splendid compliments, saying how his books were read and admired across the Channel, and that his fame had become international, and so forth. Wells smiled and nodded gently. He had caught his own name, but he did not understand a word of it. (Mr. Wells himself said this, but the reason can only have been because he had not then troubled to master the French language.)

I spoke just now of Anatole France as a great writer—but, in fact, I never thought him one. I should describe him as first class second class. To be great as a writer one must have originality, and also a certain nobleness of mind. Although very witty, France was distinctly imitative, founding himself in the beginning on Voltaire, and making all his early successes by work that might be described as bringing Voltaire up to date. If his biographers can be trusted, he was by nature selfish, and mean to the verge of sordidness. The fame that was accorded to him in his own country offers a good example of the widely different attitudes towards literature of the French nation and the British. The French are persuaded that literature is a high and important thing, and they have traditionally taken enormous pride in the possession of great authors, and have shown them every possible honour. Both in literature and in other walks of life, when they have not a great man they pretend



to have one. Towards the end of Anatole's life everybody of real weight had disappeared, so that he stood alone, challenging attention in his splendid and successful mediocrity. His country adopted him then as its grand old man of letters. Eventually they gave him a State funeral.

What we English think of literature is easily apparent. A glance at the Civil List Pensions would suffice. There could not be a mistake if we took no further evidence.



## MY MOTHER

MY mother was twenty-five years of age when *Lady Audley's Secret* appeared in 1862 ; but the book had been written quite two years before, and it was therefore the work of a girl of twenty-three. I think that, considered only from that point of view, it is a truly splendid achievement. The early part of it appeared serially in a magazine which collapsed after the twelfth number, and the manuscript in its fragmentary state was laid aside by my mother. But then Buxton the actor wrote to the magazine people saying that he had been enormously impressed by the story, and that he deeply regretted its interruption. He asked that the unknown author might be implored to finish the novel. Encouraged by this unexpected approval, my mother fetched out her manuscript and completed it. Issued by Messrs. Tinsley (a newly founded and enterprising firm of publishers) in the three volume form, it was an immediate and unprecedented success. Even on the day of publication the Tinsleys sent a message to say that it was being received with startling favour. A week afterwards all the world and his wife were reading or talking about the book ; and edition after edition was called for in such rapid succession that it was impossible to print and bind fast enough to satisfy the demand. It was followed in quick succession by *Henry Dunbar*, *Eleanor's Victory*, *Aurora Floyd* ; and with each of these books Miss Braddon strengthened her hold upon an immense public. She had become at once a world's best seller.

A quality in her writing at once recognised was its interestingness. One's interest was awakened at the



very beginning and it never flagged, was never allowed to flag, until one came to the very end of the story. The story was always new and strong, yet this was far from being all. The characterisation was excellent, and the knowledge of life shown most remarkable. But where had she obtained this experience? It must have been something of that creative imagination which seems so like the record of reality in the work of the most highly gifted writers; for except during two years hers had been an entirely sheltered life.

The long sequence of her books extended through the years, and like the years themselves brought changing thoughts, fresh sights, modified or altered manners. All this she recorded and portrayed. Instead of lingering in the past she moved forward with her times and was always well abreast of the age. Her novels, except her six historical novels, might all be taken as faithful pictures of contemporary life.

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, my mother's people belonged to the corner of North Cornwall that lies between Padstow and Camelford.

Apparently they settled there in Tudor times. During the reign of Elizabeth a Braddon represented this remote part of the world in Parliament. Under Charles the Second Lawrence Braddon was implicated in a conspiracy, and condemned to pay a heavy fine and to forfeit a considerable amount of land. But Lawrence, a younger son, having no money and possessing no land, his relatives suffered the punishment, and they thought ever afterwards that they had been very unjustly treated. From that period down through time no Braddon was particularly known to fame until, with Queen Victoria on the throne, my mother and her brother Edward again brought the name into prominence.

On the other hand, if the Braddons did not render themselves famous they nevertheless got along comfortably and prosperously. Many were connected with India, as soldiers, civil servants, and merchants. One was a judge, another an indigo planter, and so on. Above



all they were good people, living good Christian lives, honourably fulfilling obligations, helping others to the fullest extent of their power, performing self-imposed tasks of benevolence as well as all their own allotted work. It was reserved for my grandfather, Henry Braddon, to break the tradition and depart from the blameless path. But for him it would have seemed impossible to think of a bad Braddon. And his badness was perhaps no more than an amazingly complete neglect of duty.

He had tried several callings, and then unexpectedly he made himself a solicitor. My mother says of him :

“ With good abilities, good connexions, and a popular manner, he might have done well. His mother bought him a partnership in a superior firm of solicitors whose name—which I have now utterly forgotten—was a name of mark in the legal profession. But after a year or two the superior firm had begged to be allowed to return Grandmamma’s capital, and to wish Papa a long farewell.”

The above quotation is from some reminiscences of her youth that my mother wrote in the last year of her life, indeed probably only a month or two before her death. I found them, in typewritten form, among her papers when we were leaving Lichfield House. They have never been published. Together with an article written by her many years before, they form the only essay in autobiography that she ever made. For just as she never talked about herself, she very rarely thought about herself.

My grandmother was Irish, one of the three daughters of Patrick White. Her elder sister married a Mr. William Delane, who seems to have been a most amiable generous-minded person, doing many kind things for his sister-in-law and his niece. His son, my mother’s first cousin, was John Delane, long Editor of *The Times* newspaper.

Where and how Miss Fanny White met Henry Braddon I do not know. After leaving that important



firm he started business as a solicitor on his own account in London, and after his marriage he lived first at Alfred Place and then at a house in Soho with his office in the same building. My mother calls the street in which this house stood Fourth Street.

From the earliest days my mother had the deepest and most tender love of my grandmother. She speaks of the intolerable blankness of a long Sunday when my grandmother had gone into the country on a visit, describing her feelings in a way that awakens my own oldest memories. She describes too, very touchingly, small incidents that seemed so big and to occupy so much of her young life. Time, as for all imaginative children, moved very slowly. She asks herself :

“ Could it have been only in the course of two summers that I used to sit on the carpet by the massive mahogany leg of the Broadwood grand to hear my mother singing in the twilight ? She had a sweet mezzo soprano voice, and a perfect ear—and she had just a few songs that she played and sang in the summer dusk, and which have always been dearer to me than any other music that was ever sung. ‘ Portrait Charmant ’ was one, a tender little ballad which I have never seen in print, and another was ‘ Farewell, oh, farewell, to thee, Araby’s daughter ’. ‘ Flow on thou shining river ’ was a third. I had no need to know what the words meant—I loved to hear her sing, I loved to be with her, yet I know those gentle melodies and the sound of her low voice in the summer dusk filled me with inexpressible melancholy—the vague sadness of a child who does not know what sorrow means, and yet is sad.

“ Surely I must have sat by the old piano, in the old Georgian drawing-room in more than two summers—so long does that old far-off time seem to have lasted as I look back and live it again.”

Of my grandfather she writes :

“ Papa had whiskers, and was always what is



called nowadays well-groomed. I think he wore a blue or perhaps bottle-green coat, with a suspicion of brass buttons, and some kind of buff waistcoat. As I was never downstairs after five o'clock I did not enjoy the privilege of seeing him in evening dress—but I know from Mamma that he was proud of his small foot and arched instep, and very particular about his boots. I have even heard him called handsome—but never by Mamma who said his large brown eyes were like the eyes of oxen. She was not a student of Homer, and did not mean this for praise. I liked Papa, he was always kind—and gave me sixpence when I showed him my new frock with my first pocket. Papa was nobody's enemy but his own. That was what I heard about him when I was old enough to be told things, a good many years after the drawing-room in Fourth Street and the Broadwood grand had dropped into the great gulf that swallows our past years. Mr. Braddon was his own enemy.

“Mamma's life after Alfred Place was acquainted with such trouble as a wife endowed by nature with a delicate and scrupulous honesty must needs suffer when linked to a careless and happy-go-lucky gentleman who is nobody's enemy but his own.

“Glimpses there were of brightness—as for instance when Mamma and Papa, having fabricated between them an article for the Sporting Magazine with no higher ambition than to see it in print, were surprised by a handsome cheque, and invited to become regular contributors; or rather Papa was invited. Mamma remained unhonoured and unknown, the ghost who supplied the flowing paragraphs and lavish quotations from Byron and Moore.

“Papa and Mamma collaborated for some years. Papa hunted, and shot, and enjoyed himself immensely, and provided vivid descriptions of clinking runs or tremendous shoots, and Mamma developed his crude notes in magazine English, and all went the better in the home for this additional source of income, till there came an unlucky bill transaction in





W. B. MAXWELL. AGED FIFTY TWO







which his own enemy offended the good lady who was proprietor of the magazine, and never again appeared in the list of her contributors."

That rather brighter period of my grandmother's married life was quickly clouded over. My grandfather practised infidelities that became impossible to pardon. Separation was arranged. In my mother's own words: "Papa vanished from our lives—by an amicable separation. . . . I know Mamma went through the rest of her years without an evil feeling about the husband she had never loved—and that in their occasional meetings they met without any sort of anger—met, one might say, as friends."

Here is the author's narration of her almost instinctive tendency towards authorship:

"My first attempt in fiction, and in round-hand, on carefully pencilled double lines, was a story of two sisters, a good sister and a wicked, and I fear adhered more faithfully to the lines of the archetypal story than the writer's pen kept to the double fence which should have ensured neatness.

"The interval between the ages of eight and twelve was a prolific period, fertile in unfinished MSS., among which I can now trace a historical novel on the Siege of Calais—an Eastern story suggested by a passionate love of Miss Pardoc's *Turkish Tales* and Byron's *Bride of Abydos*—a story of the Hartz Mountains, with audacious flights in German diablerie—and lastly, and very perseveringly worked upon, a domestic story, called *The Old Arm Chair*.

"My brief experience of boarding school occurred at this time, and I well remember writing *The Old Arm Chair* in a penny account book, in the school-room of Cresswell Lodge, and that I was both surprised and offended at the laughter of the kindly music-teacher who, coming into the room to summon a pupil, and seeing me gravely occupied, enquired what



I was doing, and was intensely amused at my stolid method of composition, plodding on undisturbed by the voices and occupations of the older girls around me.

"*The Old Arm Chair* had certainly been a serious, painstaking effort ; but it was abandoned unfinished before my eleventh birthday.

"There came a few years later the sentimental period, in which my novels assumed a more ambitious form, and were modelled chiefly upon *Jane Eyre*, with occasional tentative imitations of Thackeray. Stories of gentle hearts that loved in vain, always ending in renunciation.

"Then followed a story of the Restoration period, a brilliantly wicked interval in the social history of England, which, after the lapse of thirty years, I am still as bent upon taking for the background of a love story as I was when I began *Master Anthony's Record* in Esmondese, and made my girlish acquaintance with the Reading-room of the British Museum, where I went in quest of local colour, and where much kindness was shown to my youth and inexperience of the book world. The romantic story of Lord Grey was to be the subject of *Master Anthony's Record*, but Master Anthony's sentimental autobiography went the way of all my earlier attempts."

When about nineteen years of age my mother went on the stage. No doubt she had some bent and talent for acting, but I know that her principal object was to be self-supporting and if possible earn money sufficient to relieve my grandmother's anxieties. It was, I think, a fine action on her part, and a very brave one too, for in those days the prejudice against the theatrical profession had a strength that may seem incredible to young people of the present time. It was shocking that a well-brought-up girl should dream of adopting the calling. My mother's relations, probably horror-stricken, implored her not to do it, or if she must persist in her rash enterprise to carry it through without using the family name.



My mother in fact had herself decided on this course, and it was not as Miss Mary Braddon, but as Miss Mary Seaton that she appeared in several stock companies and on tours during the next two years.

Unfortunately all records of this experience have disappeared, unless, as I suggested, they served as basic material for the characterisation in her books. But this is scarcely likely, because the people that she saw then were all of one small class, much alike in manner, speech, and thought, not typical of different varieties of society. The only stage friend that she retained was Miss Florence Haydon, in private life Mrs. Waugh, who should still be remembered by playgoers when, herself quite an old lady, she was acting old ladies on the stage with the most delightful humour and convincingness. The old lady in Mr. Shaw's *Man and Superman* was one of her happy creations, and afterwards she played for a considerable time with Sir Charles Hawtrey.

We were all of us very fond of Mrs. Waugh. With one or other of her two pleasant friendly daughters she came often to Lichfield House. And from her I heard something of the system of the old stock companies. Each was a permanent institution in its own town, but it linked itself to other towns to form what they called a circuit. On this circuit it went touring. When the big stars appeared, as they frequently did, they brought perhaps one or two of their own company, but for the rest they were supported by the local troupe. This naturally meant hard work for these, since two or three plays were done in the week, and the scantiest chances of rehearsal were given.

In this manner my mother played with Charles Kean, with Madame Vestris, probably with Charles Matthews and possibly with Macready.

She was accompanied by Mrs. Braddon throughout the period, and I remember that once when talking to me she reproached herself for dragging her mother about from place to place, and entailing so much trouble and discomfort on her. I remember, too, that I begged her not to entertain such thoughts, since her motives were



so unassailably good, and, moreover, as her mother in all probability enjoyed the change and movement, and was really all the better for it. In any event she was speedily able to provide comfort and even luxury for the rest of her mother's life.

While on the stage she was writing a great deal of poetry, and also farces, the beginning of dramas, and notably an operetta called *The Loves of Arcadia* that was produced at the old Strand Theatre by Miss Ada Swanborough. The last of twenty-four months concluded her experience as an actress and thence onwards she was busy only with her pen. She says :

“ A blindly-enterprising printer of Beverley, who had seen my poor little verses in the *Beverley Recorder*, made me the spirited offer of ten pounds for a serial story, to be set up and printed at Beverley, and published on commission by a London firm in Warwick Lane. I cannot picture to myself, in my after-knowledge of the bookselling trade, any enterprise more futile in its inception or more feeble in its execution ; but to my youthful ambition the actual commission to write a novel, with an advance payment of fifty shillings to show good faith on the part of my Yorkshire speculator, seemed like the opening of that pen-and-ink paradise which I had sighed for ever since I could hold a pen. I had, previously to this date, found a Mæcenas in Beverley, in the person of a learned gentleman who volunteered to foster my love of the Muses by buying the copyright of a volume of poems and publishing the same at his own expense—which he did, poor man, without stint, and by which noble patronage of Poet's Corner verse, he must have lost money. He had, however, the privilege of dictating the subject of the principal poem, which was to sing—however feebly—Garibaldi's Sicilian campaign.

“ Short of never being printed at all, my Beverley-born novel could have hardly entered upon the world of books in a more profound obscurity. That one living creature ever bought a number of *Three Times*



*Dead* I greatly doubt. I can recall the thrill of emotion with which I tore open the envelope that contained my complimentary copy of the first number, folded across, and in aspect inferior to a gratis pamphlet about a patent medicine. The miserable little wood block which illustrated that first number would have disgraced a baker's whity-brown bag, would have been unworthy to illustrate a penny bun. My spirits were certainly dashed at the technical shortcomings of that first serial, and I was hardly surprised when I was informed a few weeks later, that although my admirers at Beverley were deeply interested in the story, it was not a financial success, and that it would be only obliging on my part, and in accordance with my known kindness of heart, if I were to restrict the development of the romance to half its intended length, and to accept five pounds in lieu of ten as my reward. Having no desire that the rash Beverley printer should squander his own or his children's fortune in the obscurity of Warwick Lane, I immediately acceded to his request, shortened sail, and went on with my story, perhaps with a shade less enthusiasm, having seen the shabby figure it was to make in the book world. I may add that the Beverley publisher's payments began and ended with his noble advance of fifty shillings. The balance was never paid; and it was rather hard lines that, on his becoming bankrupt in his poor little way a few years later, a judge in the Bankruptcy Court remarked that, as Miss Braddon was now making a good deal of money by her pen, she ought to 'come to the relief' of her first publisher.

"And now my volume of verses being well under weigh, I went with my mother to farm-house lodgings in the neighbourhood of that very Beverley, where I spent, perhaps, the happiest half-year of my life—half a year of tranquil, studious days, far from the madding crowd, with the mother whose society was always all-sufficient for me—half a year among level pastures, with unlimited books from the library in Hull, an old farm-horse to ride about the green lanes,



the breath of summer, with all its sweet odours of flower and herb, around and about us ; half a year of unalloyed bliss, had it not been for one dark shadow, the heroic figure of Garibaldi, the sailor-soldier, looming large upon the foreground of my literary labours, as the hero of a lengthy narrative poem in the Spenserian metre.

“ My chief business at Beverley was to complete the volume of verse commissioned by my Yorkshire Mæcenas, at that time a very rich man, who paid me a much better price for my literary work than his townsman, the enterprising printer, and who had the first claim on my thought and time.

“ With the business-like punctuality of a salaried clerk, I went every morning to my file of *The Times*, and pored and puzzled over Neopolitan revolution and Sicilian campaign, and I can only say that if Emile Zola suffered as much over Sedan as I suffered in the freshness of my youth, when flowery meadows and the old chestnut mare invited to summer idlesse, over the fighting in Sicily, his dogged perseverance in uncongenial labour should have placed him among the Immortal Forty. How I hated the great Joseph G. and the Spenserian metre, with its exacting demands upon the rhyming faculty. How I hated my own ignorance of modern Italian history, and my own eyes for never having looked upon Italian landscape, whereby historical allusion and local colour were both wanting to that dry-as-dust record of heroic endeavour. I had only *The Times* correspondent ; where he was picturesque I could be picturesque—allowing always for the Spenserian straining—where he was rich in local colour I did my utmost to reproduce his colouring, stretched always on the Spenserian rack, and lengthened out by the bitter necessity of finding triple rhymes. Next to Giuseppe Garibaldi I hated Edmund Spenser, and it may be from a vengeful remembrance of those early struggles with a difficult form of versification, that, although throughout my literary life I have been a lover of England’s earlier



poet and have delighted in the quaintness and *naïveté* of Chaucer, I have refrained from reading more than a casual stanza or two of the "Faery Queen." When I lived at Beverley, Spenser was to me but a name, and Byron's "Childe Harold" was my only model for that exacting verse. I should add that the Beverley Mæcenas, when commissioning this volume of verse, was less superb in his ideas than the literary patron of the past. He looked at the matter from a purely commercial standpoint, and believed that a volume of verse, such as I could produce, would pay—a delusion on his part which I honestly strove to combat before accepting his handsome offer of remuneration for my time and labour. It was with this idea in his mind that he chose and insisted upon the Sicilian campaign as a subject for my muse, and thus started me heavily handicapped on the racecourse of Parnassus.

"Happy, happy days, so near to memory, and yet so far. In that peaceful summer I finished my first novel, knocked Garibaldi on the head with a closing rhapsody, saw the York spring and summer races in hopelessly wet weather, learnt to love the Yorkshire people, and left Yorkshire almost broken-heartedly on a dull grey October morning, to travel London-wards through a landscape that was mostly under water."

So far I have spoken of her as I might of any distinguished personage with whose career I had become acquainted, but now let me say something about herself, her very dear self!

Hers was naturally a happy disposition. She rejoiced in laughter, and taught us young children to love innocent mirth. She used to read to us; she walked with us, played with us, took us out for drives, but a good while elapsed before we knew that she had other more important tasks and that she belonged to the public as well as to us. Then I noticed that the name of a Miss Braddon was so often heard. Soon it seemed to have a glamour and a mystery. The sound of the name stirred



me. People addressed her by it. "Forgive me, dear Mrs. Maxwell, I can't help calling you Miss Braddon." . . . We saw letters for Miss Braddon on the hall table. And then my father showed us a new book with the name of the title page—"By M. E. Braddon, Author of *Lady Audley's Secret*."

We knew, and we took eager interest in her books as one after another they appeared. As soon as possible we enrolled ourselves among the multitude of the author's readers. We rejoiced in the honour paid to her by all our friends, and felt warm satisfaction when they said, as most of them did, "You ought to be very proud of your mother. For she is a very wonderful woman." And indeed she was wonderful.

With my memory of all this there mingles a strong odour of printer's ink.

Somebody had given us a toy printing press, and we were busy with it in the nursery—my brother Gerald as master printer, and the rest of us as printer's devils. The task was to print in the top right-hand corner of a lot of sheets of manuscript paper the title of the novel which my mother had just started writing. It was the one word "*Vixen*."

We had pretended that it would enormously facilitate her work if she had the title printed for her; and she sweetly encouraged our pretence, and would come into the nursery asking for further supplies. We doled them out to her, two or three sheets at a time, concealing, I am ashamed to say, the masses of paper that we had destroyed in the process of "machining."

*Vixen*, I believe, was the first of her books that I read. It entranced me, and the same spell was cast upon me by her three next—*The Cloven Foot*, *The Story of Barbara*, *Just as I am*. But while waiting for them I turned to the early books. My sister Fanny being older had done this a few years before I did, and I piteously implored her not to spoil them for me by disclosing plots. She promised not to, and loyally kept her word in spite of many temptations to break it; and this seems very much to her credit when I think of the intolerable



annoyance that has been caused me by grown-up people who stupidly insisted upon relating, if they happened to know it, the end of books that they saw I was not yet half-way through. As if again feeling it, I remember my tremor of excitement when suddenly there came the revelation of the identity of the man who called himself Henry Dunbar.

One of the amazing things about her was that she got through her immense amount of work as if by magic. She never seemed to be given any time in which to do it. She had no stated hours, no part of the day to be held secure from disturbance and intrusions. She was never inaccessible. Everybody went uninvited to her library, we children, the servants, importunate visitors. I don't remember that she ever refused to come away from the quiet dignified room if we asked her. And she never failed to be available as a companion to my father when he wanted her, and no matter for how long.

Truly her power of overcoming all such difficulties, her prolificness, and her prodigious industry are almost inconceivable. She wrote about half a dozen novels anonymously, and by the end of her life the novels acknowledged and published under her own name numbered eighty. Of these her historical novels, *London Pride*, *Mohawks*, *Robert Ainsleigh*, and the others demanded a great amount of study and research. Her innumerable note-books proved that she gave it to them. Two or three whole note-books are filled with extracts from the writers of each of her chosen periods. She wrote very many plays, among which *Griselda* and *The Missing Witness* met with fair success, while most of the rest were unacted. In her big library desk I found seven completed plays that must have been written in quite recent years. For a considerable time she edited my father's magazines. As if this was not enough, she wrote occasional verse and contributed articles to *The World* and to *Punch*. For *Punch* she sometimes wrote in French, and did a most amusing series of parodies of the French novelists, Zola, Ohnet, Daudet, Bourget, and the other favourites. Also she wrote in French a



novel that was published in the Paris *Figaro*. Over and above these labours she was unceasingly carrying on her education. She had always had a mastery of French, but she taught herself German, then Italian, and after that Spanish. She brushed up her Latin too until she was able, aided by some very loose translations for a crib, to read with ease and enjoyment Horace's *Odes* and Virgil's *Eclogues*. Lastly I should add that with scarcely any help from a housekeeper she actively conducted the domestic affairs of two households.

I think I have sufficiently indicated that if not the whole world to me, she was its larger, better part, and the noble benign light that she shed over it seemed to prevent darkness from closing upon me when I was far away from her. With her and because of her every pleasure was heightened, every thought rendered clearer, every intellectual effort made less difficult and more valuable. She had so wide-reaching a mind, and with such great natural strength in all its workings, that one might well have expected her to be a little hard and severe upon weakness. But on the contrary she was sweetly gentle in dealing with the feeble and the incompetent. Her compassion was unfailing, her benevolence limitless.

Far before her time in many of her views, she was strongly of opinion that with State education should go care of the adequate nourishment of the young pupils, and she took me when I was a very little boy more than once to some schools in Great Ormond Street to see all the children at their mid-weekly dinner at which they devoured the big joints of hot roast mutton, the lavish supplies of vegetables, the piled stacks of bread, and emptied all the jugs of milk to my astonishment and admiration. She herself was providing those dinners, and she continued to provide them for years. Again, as I have said, she was the pioneer of the movement to give London children summer holidays in the country. Still farther ahead of prevailing thought, she felt that it was wicked to leave the old to the hazard of pain and want, and declared that their care should be another



obligation of the State. To meet the neglected duty to the extent of her own power, she contributed large sums, founding and endowing old age pensions for printers. Moreover hospitals and philanthropic societies can very rarely have appealed to her in vain.

My father was just as charitable. She could not have supported companionship with a mean or close-fisted person. But my father instead of checking her urged her on. Together they kept the wolf from many doors. They rescued unlucky people from monetary fiascos. They gave liberal allowances to retired servants. They took over the destinies of relatives, or old friends, who had fallen on evil days and assured them of maintenance for a whole future.

She went on writing. Unlike too many English authors, she was not forced to work still in advanced age. She had earned a solid fortune with her pen. She possessed an annual income that allowed her to live largely and yet showed a handsome margin at the end of the year. She worked because she loved her work. So the untiring hand could not stop. She was writing on her seventieth birthday . . . on her seventy-fifth. She died in her seventy-eighth year, leaving the manuscript of an unpublished novel.

Nowadays I am sometimes wounded by the tone of references publicly made to my mother as a writer. The words are not unkind, but they imply a sort of amused tolerance. Of course many of the younger critics of to-day agree to consider the whole bulk of mid-Victorian literature as a joke, and perhaps with exceptions that are few in comparison with the large number of the practising writers they may not be far wrong. But they do a great injustice to my mother's work when they class her as belonging to the ordinary writers of that age. Without question she must be ranked as one of the shining exceptions.

They, the high-placed among her contemporaries, welcomed her as of themselves. Wilkie Collins, the merit



of whose novels still receives a full acknowledgment, had a sincere admiration of her power and originality. Of Charles Reade and Bulwer Lytton I have already spoken in this relation. Thackeray loved her books. Lady Ritchie, his daughter, described to me how when they were staying at Westgate one autumn, he went three times in a day to inquire at the railway station about the arrival of a parcel from London that he was eagerly expecting. She met him returning successful from his third visit with the desired packet under his arm. "It has come," he called to her happily. "I have it here." . . . It was the three volumes of my mother's last new novel. As a reader he delighted in the result of her skill, and as a fellow-craftsman he did homage to the skill itself. Once he said to Maude Stanley, "If I could weave and work a plot as Miss Braddon does, I would be the greatest novelist that ever lived."

The stylists too thought well of her and saw no fault in her. To cite only a couple of them! George Moore said autobiographically that it was the appeal of Beauty coming to him from sources that included prominently *Lady Audley's Secret* which proved a call that he followed with increasing vigour until his strayings became fewer and the way wider. And Robert Louis Stevenson, who might be considered as it were the high priest of the temple of style, wrote to her from Samoa late in his life so charmingly that I give the bulk of his letter. "I remember reading *Lady Audley's Secret* when I was fifteen, and I wish my days to be bound each to each by Miss Braddon's novels. Apparently I am not alone in this opinion. I have been over by far the greater part of the Pacific. When a ship comes in the trader or traders are always on the look out for new novels. In a small way the schooner plays the part of a circulating library. But there is one book, I am sorry to be obliged to inform you, which is a mere drug in the market in the Pacific. 'Oh, no, I have that already,' is the cry—and the book is *Aurora Floyd*. After all, it is something to be out and away greater than Scott,



Shakespeare, Homer, in the South Seas, and to that you have attained."

The treatment that she received from the Press was changing and progressive. A storm of denunciation if not abuse burst out against her after the appearance of her first two or three books. She was accused of sensationalism. She was the leader of a most dangerous school—the new sensational novelists. She and her followers, if not checked, might undermine the morals of the rising generation. It is difficult to-day to understand what nonsense formed the basis of such charges, or to believe in the honesty of those who launched them. But they fell silent before long. Her popularity instead of waning seemed always to grow bigger. In the phrase of George Meredith, she "had shown them the Medusa head of Success and the critics were frozen into acquiescence."

Gradually then the newspapers became kind to her, and softer, more gentle, more appreciative with every passing year, until in the end they gave her nothing but affectionate praise. And this was genuine and no mere submission to a prevailing fashion. She infallibly endeared herself to readers, whether laymen or experts. The world at large seemed to know her well, although they knew her only through her books. It was full of grateful friends. They really loved her. Near the end of her life a critic of weight said, "Miss Braddon is a part of England. She is in the encyclopædias and dictionaries. Our English-speaking world would not have been the same without her."



## WORK AND PLAY

TWO or three years after our settlement in London I was elected Chairman of the Society of Authors, an organisation that I had long considered to be of the greatest value to writers, by reason of widespread influence exercised, and for the next four years I devoted a great deal of my time and energy to its affairs. Speedily "put wise" by Mr. G. Herbert Thring, who had acted as secretary since the days of its first Chairman, Sir Walter Besant, who had indeed given the service of his life to the Society, I found the work of absorbing interest. Scarcely a day then passed on some part of which I was not occupied with it. At the same time Hugh Walpole made me Chairman of his recently founded Society of Bookmen. Out of the Bookmen was developed the much wider and more active organisation known as The National Book Council, and I became Chairman of that also. Still further I was appointed to the Council of the Royal Society of Literature and the Committee of the Royal Literary Fund, and of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London. Another again was the committee of a Society invented and started by Galsworthy. I joined this only because I had fallen into a habit of doing whatever Galsworthy asked me to do. I cannot even remember its objects or purposes; but after being generously supported for a little while by its creator and his friends, it flickered out of existence. Galsworthy made me join the P.E.N. Club, and Mr. Thring decided that I must belong to the Anglo-French Luncheon Club as soon as Mrs. Aubrey le Blond had inaugurated it. At the gatherings of both these institutions I presided a good many times when a distinguished foreigner was being



entertained. There were minor committees that I do not mention, and I leave out of account the preparation of speeches, often long ones, and the propaganda articles that I wrote on behalf of "The Authors" and the "Books". I was of course also writing my own books and stories.

I made this recitation of offices and duties in order to prove that I was now a really busy man. Certainly I could not have fulfilled my tasks as comfortably as I did if I had not enjoyed the extraordinarily able assistance of my secretary, Miss Westcott, the queen of secretaries as well as a constant long-tested friend to me and mine.

The first thing that I attempted at the Society of Authors was to strengthen the Committee of Management, and to add a few names that by some strange oversight had been omitted from our Council. Mr. Joseph Conrad and Mr. Eden Philpotts signified in gracious terms their consent to be enrolled. I give their letters of reply. Mr. Philpotts writing from Torquay under date of July, 1924, said :

"MY DEAR MR. MAXWELL,

"I appreciate the fact that our new Chairman should have written so kindly to me, and take this opportunity of congratulating you on your high office. Of course I much appreciate the compliment your Committee pays me and am gratified to join your Council. Such a body must of necessity embrace many others beside pure artists and creators, for the Society's interests now cover a wide field, I am proud to be one, elected upon the strength of his serious work. Pray thank your Committee cordially for its appreciation.

"Hoping it may be my privilege to meet you at some future time,

"Believe me, sincerely yours,

(Signed) EDEN PHILPOTTS."



Mr. Conrad, writing from Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, Kent, said :

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I have always had a high appreciation of the work done by the Authors Society. I prize the flattering request conveyed in your letter the more for its coming over your signature. But I am not a member yet. Perhaps our (you see I am already making myself at home) most able Secretary will be good enough to send me the usual printed information.

“ Believe me, with the greatest regard,

“ Yours, (Signed) J. CONRAD.”

To the regret of everybody Mr. Rudyard Kipling had left the Society during the War, and I wanted very much to win him back to the fold. But in this attempt I was not successful. He wrote very kindly, but very firmly, declining to return to us and repeating the reasons of his withdrawal. I give his letter in full because I shall speak presently of the tendency to which he refers.

“ BATEMAN’S, BURWASH,

SUSSEX.

*June 19, '24.*

“ DEAR MR. MAXWELL,

“ Congratulations, first on your appointment as Chairman. May you be fortunate and make the Society more of a power than it is even now. But—as to my going on the Council—I resigned because it seemed to me that the Society was behaving a little bit too much like a trades union, in that it rather began to give orders as to how a man should dispose of his work after it was done. *You* were out on another business at the time, and I made haste to put the whole memory behind me, but, as far as I recall, there was something like a hint in some of the correspondence that it might be the worse for one if one didn’t fall into line on the matter. I didn’t do anything more : and I didn’t in any way impugn



the actions of the Society because (well for one thing I knew and loved Besant when I was young) it does most valuable work in checking the too enterprising publisher. But I should prefer to remain as I am—a sincere well-wisher but no partner.

“As a fellow-craftsman in every way, I know you’ll understand.

“Very sincerely yours,

“RUDYARD KIPLING.”

Among highly distinguished people, not necessarily professional authors, composers, or playwrights, that we also enrolled for the Council were Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Lord Grey of Fallodon, Lord Birkenhead, Mr. Baldwin, and, I think, Lord Oxford and Winston Churchill.

The Council is in theory the governing body of the Society, but in practice it delegates its authority to the Committee of Management, and the composition of this Committee is therefore of great importance. Mr. Galsworthy, I found, was retiring, but I prevailed upon him to retain his seat at the board. Mr. A. A. Milne similarly intended to leave us, but I obtained his consent to stay. Mr. Hugh Walpole had already left, but I persuaded him to come back. Major Beith (Ian Hay) was firmly established and of great and continued benefit to us. Mr. Stephen McKenna came as a new recruit. Another of my recruits was Lord Gorell, and he proved himself of ever-increasing value, finally following me as Chairman, and filling the office with credit and renown for a record period of time. An old and esteemed member of the Committee was Mr. Aylmer Maude, the well-known translator and biographer of Tolstoy. There were two or three more, a musician, a journalist, a playwright; and we had two ladies—Miss Symonds (George Paston), and Dr. Marie Stopes, who was at all times an enthusiastic and generous supporter of the Society. Together they formed a really strong working Committee.



The subsidiary committees were also given additional weight, with Arnold Bennett and Mr. Somerset Maugham coming on the Pensions Committee, and Ian Hay Beith presiding over the Dramatists' Committee.

It seemed desirable to secure ordinary members as well as these distinguished people, and for this purpose I was fortunately able to have the skilled assistance of Mr. Owen Rutter, the novelist. A canvass was conducted by him, the result being that in a year we obtained six hundred new members. After that we ceased touting.

There were about three thousand members when I took over and the number is now about four thousand. There ought to be many more, but too many were unfaithful to us and some also very ungrateful. People had a nasty trick of joining the Society when they were in trouble and resigning when they had been got out of it.

The practice of publishing charity books made up of free contributions continued after the War. Authors were requested to aid a good cause by writing a story for the projected volume, as though to write stories was not their calling or trade, and the means by which they earned a livelihood. To take from them as much as perhaps a week's labour without payment was very unfair. Yet it was difficult for the author to refuse. Sometimes considerable pressure was brought to bear, as when the invitation was backed up by a statement that the Prince of Wales or some other high personage had the matter very closely at heart, and he would take compliance as a personal favour. Often too the communication was accompanied by a list of very eminent authors who had already given in their adherence. This also was pressure, and almost as if the desirability of securing an advertisement were being put forward. It would not of course do an author much good to be included among the heads of his profession, but it might be harmful if he were omitted.

Our Society had resolutely set its face against this practice of working for nothing, and it would have liked to enforce a rule forbidding submission to it. But as



Mr. Kipling said, the interference of the Society seemed too like trade unionism, and it was because of it that we lost him. At the beginning of my chairmanship a good many people thought that we must end that way, and were quite in favour of our becoming a regular trade union. Many more, including myself, regarded such a fate with horror. But I soon thought that there could be no real danger, for I found, even if I had not known it before, that authors of all people on earth are the most impossible to unite in any line of conduct whatever.

Another well-established grievance was the injury that authors not infrequently suffered under the existing law of libel, and we made a strong effort to get it altered. Sir William Bull introduced a Bill in the Commons, and as it was automatically smothered, Lord Gorell next year started another Bill in the Lords. He was able to procure a full dress debate for it, and thus our particular troubles were handsomely aired. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Cave, as it happened, was a neighbour of ours at Richmond and a good friend of long standing, and I was therefore able to explain to him the exact condition of affairs so far as we authors were concerned, telling him many cases of how the threat of instituting a libel action was used against authors almost as blackmail. He took keen and active interest, and in speaking during the debate adopted a favourable attitude. The Bill was referred to a mixed Commission, and although it went no further than that, it had done good by drawing wide attention to the subject.

Naturally we had much to do with law matters of one sort or another. Our duty before all others was the protection of our members, and we always had small law suits on hand for breach of contract, recovery of debts, infringement of copyright and so on. As well as plaintiffs we were sometimes defendants; for when we had exposed and roundly condemned people guilty of fraud or sharp practice, they brought actions against us as a last means of clearing their characters. We won, I think without exception, all these actions, but sometimes



victory was nearly as bad as defeat. In the biggest and most protracted of such cases, the plaintiff against whom we had been given costs immediately went bankrupt, and we were saddled with a heavy bill. Whenever possible we kept out of Court, and I personally used to be called in to attempt the settlement of disputes between any two authors who were members of the Society. Also I made overtures to the publishers to join us in knocking out a few remaining piratical traders, who were still bringing discredit on the profession. I thought, too, that all the reputable publishers might agree to conditions for a standard minimum agreement. For a longish time I had been convinced that the Society's habit of treating all publishers as natural enemies had become altogether out of date, and that the community of interest between authors and their publishers should be plainly recognised. John Galsworthy and Hugh Walpole both supported this view strongly; and when I sounded the American Authors League, Mr. Shuler, the Secretary, said at once that they concurred. To further these aims we had joint meetings of publishers, agents, and ourselves at the Society offices; there was a great deal of circularisation, and we wrote an immense number of letters. As a result, I think (I hope without vainglory) I was unquestionably instrumental in establishing a better feeling between publishers and agents and ourselves.

At the Society we had funds sufficient only to give a few pensions. We earnestly wished that we had been better provided, and we all endeavoured to interest people in this need. When a pension became vacant the number of applicants with solid claims was heart-breakingly large. Exactly the same experience, the unfortunate condition of elderly authors, with a record of really good honest work behind them, is shown by the applications to the Royal Literary Fund.

My two kind friends, Madame Norman Bohn and Mademoiselle Michaut, had given me a free run of the French Institute, and both there and at the Anglo-



French Luncheon Club, I took the chair on many occasions when distinguished French writers were being entertained. Further I had the great pleasure of entertaining a good many of them myself, generally by parties at the Garrick. André Maurois, then only known by *Colonel Bramble* and *Ariel*, came to England at this period. Jules Romains and Georges Duhamel, the authors respectively of *Hommes de Bonne Volonté* and *Salavin*, came more than once : also Francis de Croisset, the clever and satirical playwright. Then I remember presiding at public luncheons given in honour of Henri Bordeaux, Marcelle Tinaire, Paul Morand, and Claude Farrère. Monsieur Bordeaux is an academician, a good catholic, and immensely industrious as a writer.

Madame Marcelle Tinaire interested me greatly because I had always liked her novels, finding them much better written than one would expect from her rather offhand treatment by critics, and with a sustained power that is unusual in Frenchwomen of middle life. She told me that she was overwhelmed by the lack of order, indeed the chaotic character of London streets, and the architectural contrasts that they offer. To her London was a mighty maze, and quite without a plan. She was staying at the Ritz Hotel, and she said that she tried to go out for walks, but after a little way she lost herself, became frightened, and hailing a taxi-cab, asked the driver to take her back to the Ritz. On the other hand, there is not, one might say, a devious turning, a labyrinthine complication of passages, or a blind alley in London, every inch of which is not known to Monsieur Paul Morand. Moreover, he knows London society as well as the town itself. Judging, not merely from his book on London, but his other books, I would say unhesitatingly that no French writer has ever penetrated so far into our habits and our mode of thought. A diplomat before he was an author, he once lived for three years at the French Embassy at Albert Gate. Twice, with an interval of years, I was in the chair for Claude Farrère, and talking with him I recalled the impression made upon me long ago when reading *L'homme qui Assassina*



and *Bataille*. On his second visit to London only the other day I got out from the library some of his most recent work, as I wished to pay him compliments that had not gone stale by lapse of time. I was immensely struck with his latest book, *The Chieftain*—as strong and well-managed a story as any that he had done in his vigorous youth. It is the tale of a revolutionary chief in a small country that must be accepted as Portugal, and he told me that while he was writing it he happened to be in Rome, and Mussolini asked to know what he was engaged upon at the moment. Farrère told him the story, explaining that he had reached the culminating part of the narrative, when his fabled chieftain sets the rebels in motion and overthrows the Government, and saying that without personal experience to guide him he found it extraordinarily difficult to make a convincing description of the successful progress of the revolt.

The Duce said: "There really should not be any difficulty. . . . Listen." Then he sat on the arm of Farrère's chair and discoursed. "In such a case one would have two revolts, one behind the other—the sham one and the real one." And then he traced step by step the progress of a rapid, violent, and entirely successful rebellion. Claude Farrère gratefully thanked him, and in due course put it all in his book.

Another visitor was Paul Giraldu, a French author who to my mind surpasses in merit all his contemporaries. There is in his work a fineness of expression and a nobility of thought that I do not discover anywhere else. His poem *Toi et Moi* and his play *Aimer* made a firm success, and since then the same high level of plan and craftsmanship has always been sustained. He was good enough to send me quite recently his last play, *Christine*, and I think it quite as fine as the others. I believe that he has a faithful following in France, although he has never received the official recognition that might have been confidently expected. It seems to me amazing that he is not yet a member of the Académie Française.

Among the distinguished people that I asked to meet



him was Maurice Baring, and those two became immediately real friends. He sometimes comes across the Channel to stay for a day or two at Maurice's charming house at Rottingdean. Because of this friendship I have had the pleasure of seeing him again.

I was busy, but my life was far from being all work and no play. Indeed it was rich in gaiety, amusement, and relaxation. Our offspring continued to be joyful playmates both of them. With my wife we had pleasant family holidays, once in Belgium and often in Northern France. Alone with my son Henry, drawing towards the end of his time at Harrow, I went on long pleasure cruises, then not nearly so popular as they have since become—round the Mediterranean to Constantinople and to the German Ocean and the Baltic for the northern capitals. When my girl made her *débutante's* curtsey I went about with her—even to dances.

When I revisited Richmond, as I did fairly often, my feelings were affected by transient depression. I avoided passing old Lichfield House, ashamed that I had let it go into the hands of strangers. As I made my way up the hill to the Park ghosts of the past came out to meet me. As I walked on my mother was at my side. So many hundreds of times we had walked thus. The old sadness and the great sense of loss fell upon me.

But I was cheerful again at Pembroke Lodge, which had no close association with any past experiences or distresses. As well as paying ordinary visits I went there occasionally to stay for a few days, and I might have stayed for months, since Lady Dudley's kindness knew no bounds. "When are you coming?" she used to say. "Your room is waiting for you." And very pleasant that room was on summer mornings. To wake in it and hear birds singing, see the branches of forest trees, catch the perfume of the flowers beneath the windows, did one good. Breakfast was brought to me, such a breakfast as one only had at Pembroke Lodge, and I dawdled over it. Lady Dudley and Bobby White had gone to London to pursue their tasks, she at the Red Cross and he in



Throgmorton Street. I scribbled my stuff in the cool silent library. Then after dinner we had quiet intimate talk, and Bobby drew out Lady Dudley to tell me of her youth and early married life. I never tired of hearing the tale of that grand bygone time.

The friendship between Bobby White and Lady Dudley was very charming to observe, and later it became quite beautiful. He had been the friend of her sons, who were his contemporaries, and he was really like an adopted son. I think that no one ever knew so many people as he did, and they all liked him. He never made an enemy. As the younger son of a not too wealthy peer, he had gone into a line regiment. Then after being on the Staff he had various appointments in South Africa. There he took a prominent part in the Jameson Raid. With other officers of that ill-fated incursion, he was tried, sentenced, and put in prison. He was, I think, the only one of them who served a full sentence.

When he came out of the prison gates it was with a life in ruins. He had forfeited his commission in the Army, he had no calling, nobody seemed to want him ; he felt like a pariah and an outcast. It was then that Lady Dudley actively befriended him, put heart into him, told him that he could easily pick up the pieces of a broken career and build another one. Soon her stimulating forecast was justified by events. He was reinstated in the Army for the South African War, served through it with distinction, came back to England full of energy and confidence. He went into the City as a stockbroker, and despite the common belief that retired soldiers and civil servants invariably fail when they enter that realm of hard-faced experts, Major White met with lasting success, becoming partner in a firm of high reputation. He made within a few years a hundred thousand pounds. For the Great War he fetched out his Sam Browne belt and khaki tunic, as I have described, and did so well that he was made a Brigadier-General. If he had not been wounded and sent home early in 1918 he would certainly have had a Division.



Some time after he had withdrawn from active work with his firm he became a permanent guest at Pembroke Lodge, and thereby added to the happiness of Lady Dudley. Her affection for him seemed to me at once romantic and businesslike. She admired him, yet knew what was good for him. He was a hero but he needed guidance. She leaned upon him, but nevertheless was motherly and protective. He on his side had deep admiration, gratitude, and devotion. From the time of which I am speaking he did more and more for her. In her last years he made it his mission to watch over her and save her from trouble. But for him those last years could not possibly have been as peaceful and contented as they were.

Memories of another great friend, one that I was too soon to lose, connect themselves with Pembroke Lodge and Richmond. To remember that most pleasant of all golf courses below Richmond Hill at Sudbrook is to think of Lord Ribblesdale. He and I played there so often, and I know that he thoroughly enjoyed those days that we spent there together. The wooded distances rested one's eyes; the gentle air seemed fresher and clearer than the over-breathed atmosphere of London; the clubhouse, of early Georgian architecture, had a noble room, spacious, lofty, finely decorated, that gave one pleasure merely to enter. These surroundings were exactly suitable to the unusual graciousness and old-world elegance of Ribblesdale himself.

Sargent's portrait of him in the National Gallery is life-like and not a flattering conception. Characteristically habited as in life, tall, with a handsomeness so refined that it made the word seem vulgar and out of place, with easy carriage and well-poised head, he looks out at one from the canvas—"the Ancestor," "the Aristocrat," as people indifferently called the picture. Much of his great charm was perhaps due to his complete naturalness. He was not in the least conscious that in following his fastidious taste he frequently differed from the bulk of mankind. Nor was he aware that he gave expression to individuality even in costume,



and that with his big loosely folded neckties, his almost square bowler hats, his enormous gloves, he was far from being in the prevailing fashion.

Instead of returning to London if the weather went wrong on our arrival at Sudbrook and we saw that golf would be impossible, we nevertheless remained for the rest of the day. Its hours passed happily. He was a truly delightful talker, and he had the supreme merit that he would change at a moment's notice into a listener. But conversation with him did not become a series of dissertations delivered turn and turn about. It was a genuine exchange of ideas.

Although, as I have said, so entirely free from self-consciousness, he could be and often was penetratingly observant of other people, and rapidly recognising slight clues in manner, voice, or spoken words, he could build up whole characters.

He loved his family, and had suffered most cruel bereavement in the loss of two brilliant sons. He had a great respect for the intellect of one of his three daughters. He cited her judgments with touching pride. . . . "My daughter Barbara—I don't know if you have met her—she married Sir Matthew Wilson—is the soundest and most trustworthy critic of modern fiction. The other day she said that Joseph Conrad . . ." In parenthesis or amplification I must say here that I think he was right about Barbara Wilson's power as a critic. She has inherited his perfect taste and writes delightfully. Her book about French life is truly a many-faceted gem. Moreover she is so very charming and lovable that it needed no fatherly partiality to make me esteem and value her. I was content then, and I am to-day after long years, to accept dear Barbara's literary opinion as infallible.

Ribblesdale was engaged upon a volume of reminiscences, in which he tended to stick now and then after a flying start. He showed me his work chapter by chapter, and I always encouraged him to go on with it boldly. It seemed to me altogether excellent, such a book as only he could write. In one chapter he described



Fontainebleau Forest as seen by him when a boy ; and he made a vivid picture of the pageantry of stag-hunting as practised by princely establishments in France, with the great round horns, the splendid liveries of the hunt servants, the relays of hounds in leash waiting to join the chase, and the Emperor Napoleon the Third, a hunched-up figure sitting droopingly upon a motionless horse at a point where several rides intersected. He did not guess that when grown up he would be the Master of our Royal Buckhounds.

In June, 1926, the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques organized a Conference in Paris and invited all nations to send representatives. The Committee of our Society decided that we should be of the gathering and they charged me to go to it, taking with me one or two English playwrights who should be as distinguished as possible. I was fortunate enough to secure a brace of very distinguished ones, Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr. Somerset Maugham. They and Mr. Thring completed our delegation.

Monsieur André Rivoire was president of the Conference, but one day Monsieur Robert de Flers took his place. Also Monsieur de Flers gave a luncheon party for some of us. I asked my friend Maurice Lanoire, the writer, to join us at the Conference and he consented to become our permanent representative in France.

We met at the Rothschild Institute, and at our first assembly it really was amazing to find how many different countries possessed theatres and flocks of dramatists. The staircase and reception-rooms of the Institute were filled with the sound of many tongues, and one thought of people chatting together on the Tower of Babel. Our first meeting was, I think, on a Saturday, and at the meeting next day (Sunday) the business in hand fully unfolded itself. Once again we were confronted with the redoubted spectre of trade unionism, for the French Society evidently wished all other countries to join in agreement with its rules, and henceforth be altogether



bound by them. I must explain that in regard to the stage, the French Society had established an organisation for the control both of the theatrical managers and the authors. The Society collects and transmits all fees, deducting a reasonable commission for this service. It does not enforce any rigid rate of royalties, and although there is a fixed minimum, there is nothing to prevent the dramatist from demanding payment at a rate higher than the minimum. In many respects this is an admirable system, but it could never be accepted by us, because, while in theory allowing an author freedom, in practice it compels submission. To all intents and purposes membership of the French Society is a condition precedent to having one's work performed on the French stage. From our point of view that is a quite inadmissible condition.

A secondary aim of the Conference was to introduce rules similar in character to govern the international market of translations. So far as we were concerned then, the whole thing had become no more than an academic discussion.

In these circumstances I slipped away after Monday's sitting, and went to Ascot with my daughter. It was her second visit to the annual racing garden-party. She enjoyed gay crowds. Like myself, too, she always found interest in men and women, merely as human beings.

A bigger and far more amusing outing was when I went to America as the representative of England in an international congress about the cinema. It was a pleasant time of year—the beginning of June. I was being paid for—an experience as gratifying as it is unusual in the story of one's life. I crossed the Atlantic in the comfortable and well-found hotel known as the *Berengaria*, with high spirits.

At a considerable distance from New York we were near the shore, and we slackened speed because of a regatta that was in progress there. Large numbers of people were on the water in small boats, while large



pleasure steamers with crowded decks threaded their way here and there. On each of the steamers there was a band, and all the bands were playing the same thing—"Yes, we have no bananas!" This song had just "caught on" in the tremendous way in which everything appears to happen in America. It went through the vast territory of the continent as if it had been a rushing wind that carried with it an infection of joyous-madness. There came on board here a big group of journalists who immediately cornered me for an interview. I begged them to let me off the interview, and instead to accept a message addressed to the whole of their great country. My message was in these words: "I am over fifty years of age, and this is the first time that I have been to America. I am an English novelist, and I am not going to lecture. I am staying for a fortnight, and I do not intend to write a book about America afterwards." It was extraordinarily well received—my message—and many people congratulated me upon it. "You really aren't going to deliver any lectures? Well now, that's just splendid of you. It sounded at first too good to be true."

To my mind there has always been something pathetic in America's surrender to the established custom of lecturing. Of course the bulk of the population are ardently desirous of being taught and elevated, and they seek every chance of improving themselves. With others, no doubt, going to lectures is merely like other ineradicably bad habits. They would like to break the habit if they could, but they cannot.

Using an expression that among many others I learned with great pleasure, "I fell for" America. In all respects it surpassed my most sanguine expectations. The proverbial hospitality seemed to me of a much finer quality than is usually attributed to it. It was considerate, useful, well devised, and not, as is sometimes said, overwhelming. I was the titular guest of the Authors League of America, but was, I believe, being paid for by the film industry, as represented by the Famous Players-Lasky Company, and only with



dodges and subterfuges could I succeed in paying anything at all for myself. It had been the idea of Mr. Adolph Zuker, head of the Company, to convene this International Congress, and I found him to be altogether the reverse of the vulgar blown-out film magnate of light drama and comic literature. A very quiet man of little more than forty, he impressed me as being genuinely ambitious of raising the intelligence of audiences by giving them noble and beautiful pictures. Having made such a vast amount of money that he could not reasonably want any more, he seemed now thinking of art for art's sake apart from profit. I think that his Congress, which continued day after day for about a week, gave him complete satisfaction. To me it was intensely interesting. The views of different countries were expressed effectively. Explanations by experts of all kinds were most enlightening.

People had been told off to take charge of me, and throughout my fortnight's visit I had as guides, philosophers, and friends, Mr. Henry Gallup Paine, Editor of *The Authors League Journal*, and a most instructive companion; Mr. Glendon Alvine, publicity agent; and Mr. Clarence Thompson, a clever and energetic journalist.

Our Congress wound up with a huge banquet, and after that, my official entertainment being over, I was able to consort with private friends. Foremost amongst these were Joe Sears with his clever wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Doubleday. Joe was my first publisher in America, and Nelson was my American publisher at the moment. I remember a wonderful luncheon for men only given by Mr. Sears at one of the clubs, when I had the privilege of meeting several prominent people—Mr. Arthur Brisbane, the famous literary critic, Robert Chambers, Mr. Cravath, the lawyer, with a legal fame that has spread to England and at this time likely to come himself as Ambassador, Joseph Lincoln, a couple of bankers, and an artist then in much request as a portrait painter. Mr. and Mrs. Sears gave me, too, a pleasant day at their home on Long Island, during the course of



which I met many other interesting people. Of these I particularly recall Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, widow of the President, and an enlightening conversation that I had with her. She told me that on the farm lands people stuck close to the land just as much as our bucolic people. It was a mistake to suppose that they were full of enterprise, and ready at any moment to pick up their poor little traps and start off in search of more profitable adventures. Some of them, she said, had not gone ten miles from home by the end of their lives. She also said something I have very often heard since—that New York is not America. Every true American felt it to be too cosmopolitan, while in the West it was altogether regarded as a foreign city, the affairs of which did not concern them.

Mr. and Mrs. Doubleday also had a house on Long Island, and they entertained me there, as well as taking me to theatres and to fashionable restaurants.

More writers whose acquaintance I made were Channing Pollock and George Middleton, playwrights; Mr. George Barr Baker, Editor of *Everybody*, Mr. Rex Beach, who wrote stories of Alaska, Mr. Gillett Burgess, Mr. Jesse Lynch Williams, Mr. Frank Adams, a comic writer of great popularity, Mr. Grant Overton, Mr. Thomas Dixon, Mrs. Alice Dewar Miller. I also met Mr. Will Hays, late Postmaster-General, and already become a sort of uncrowned king of the film industry, which he still continues to be.

I myself ventured on giving a luncheon party at the Waldorf-Astoria, and I received compliments for having gathered together such a notable company of men and women. And most cordial praise was awarded me by an English guest for providing alcoholic beverages at the meal. America was, of course, still in the stranglehold of prohibition.

I have said nothing of my sensations in the marvellous stimulating air. It seemed to me that one's energy and capacity for work was greatly enhanced out there. One wanted less sleep. One never grew really tired. I rather believe that in the case of English people in



New York this happy condition goes on until quite suddenly one breaks down with one's health in ruins.

Having given my message on arrival, I give here my parting message to the United States. These were undoubtedly my thoughts then, and I could not recall them accurately by a mere effort of memory. They show quite genuinely what I was feeling.

From the *New York Times* :

"W. B. Maxwell, Author of *The Devil's Garden*, *The Day's Journey*, and many other novels, has recently made his first visit to America as a delegate to the recent International Congress of the Motion Picture Arts. Before returning to England he put down in writing some random impressions of Americans in general and New Yorkers in particular, by way of contrast with English people and Londoners.

"I have been struck by the unexpected fact that people move more slowly here than in London. They walk more slowly alone the sidewalks, they are incredibly slower getting on and off omnibuses, going downstairs to subways or up them to elevated railways. Yet behind this slow movement there is immensely more life than in London. The faces are bright, alert, interested, whereas our London faces are like closed doors, blank, impenetrable. You may say this crowd is composed of fresh, vigorous people moving lazily and our crowd is one of tired people hurrying automatically.

"I have been struck, also, by the great difference between the New York of pictures, photographs, travellers' tales and the real New York. No anticipations prepare one either for its size or its fantastic character. For the first day or two, as I walked about the streets, I had a feeling of being in a dream. It was as if I had read of Babylon, Egypt, the early discovery of titanic buildings in Peru, and then in sleep had had a grandiose, oppressively tremendous dream.

"The dream was New York.



"I would like to add that to me New York is most beautiful as well as being stupendous—beautiful in the strictest sense of the word. On where you will, there are wonderful peeps and glimpses in it, as well as vistas and noble expanses.

"Gramercy Park, as one looks down into it from the windows of those quaint Old-World houses, is a picture from the other side of the world: it is like an eighteenth century London square, and yet it might be a place in any old town of Northern Europe; with its green trees and sequestered garden, it strikes one as a symbolic representation of past and present, as rest in the midst of motion, as a memory and a hope combined. And to this picture what the artists call 'value' is given by the tremendous modern buildings that surround it and, as they tower toward the sky, tell one again that every square foot of ground is costly and precious. Looking at Gramercy Park, one would know, if one did not know already, the love of romance, the sheer idealism, that goes to the making of the American character. For how otherwise should this 'beauty spot' have continued to find a safe shelter close against the city's heart?

"New York is noisier than London. But the noise of London is unavoidable; it is made by things that you could not possibly silence, things that should not be where they are—such as factories and warehouses, railway lines crossing main streets, cranes pulling up merchandise that has been discharged on the sidewalk, heavily laden horse wagons passing over asphalt pavement, and so forth. On the other hand, your noise seems to be made from sheer gaiety or joy of life. The rattle and clank of street cars; the light tinkle and deep note of bells, the trumpeting, hootings, siren blowings, and incessant whistlings—all this unnecessary volume of sound is just like that made by a happy child when he rattles his stick against iron railings or takes two broken tin kettles and bangs them together with both hands. I should think that with so perfectly planned a city you could get



rid of three-quarters of your noise in a week if you wished to do so. But of course you don't. Like the joyous little boy, you love your noise.

"Another thing is the very high level of your public speaking. At the recent Congress of the Motion Picture Arts I could not count the good speakers, there were so many—Henry Taft, Clayton Hamilton, Elmer Rice, Will Hayes, Alice Duer Millier, to cite a few of those who impressed by a special excellence—but in all the talk I was struck by the note of sincerity and earnestness—almost passionate earnestness. The subject was the 'Movies', but it might really have been Life and Death.

"Lastly, and to me a most humiliating difference. You Americans are at least a hundred times more fond of literature than are the people of England. Literature enters into all your lives and tinges all your thoughts in a way that would be almost inconceivable to the average Englishman. There are innumerable readers in England, but their way of reading is entirely different from yours. They read for relaxation; you read for stimulation. They care little for the book and nothing whatever for the author. Whereas on this side, even more than in France, readers seek to find the artist behind his work, are eager to learn his history, insatiably anxious to correct their judgment of his message by an accurate knowledge about himself; the English reader will read three or four books written by the same man without even learning his name.

"Do not please think that I mean there are no people in England who value books and love good literature. There is, indeed, a fine literary society, but it is composed of men and women of letters. Books are still the grandest things on earth in the opinion of Englishmen who are themselves writers of books, and literature is still honoured by all those who devote their lives to her service.

"These are the worst sort of home truths—the home truths that are told abroad."



## HOLIDAYS

IN the year 1927 I suffered from a surfeit of holidays. It was not that I did not enjoy them, for indeed they were some of the happiest of my life, but I felt that I had not earned them and that I could not afford the time they were taking. Tasks were in arrears. I seemed to be incapable of clearing them off. An unwilling idleness seemed to hold me back even when there was nothing to prevent me from bringing out my manuscript, sitting down, and pegging away. Moreover I had passed into a long phase of depression about my work. It is a state of passing gloom that is a common experience of many authors, although its causes may be widely different. The cause of mine was profound disappointment in regard to the reception of my latest book, *The Case of Bevan Yorke*.

I should explain that its publishers were satisfied. The book had been a success, if measured by ordinary business standards. Its circulation had been big enough to keep it in the class of best sellers. The press had been complimentary, but it had made no stir, no "sensation". This from my point of view was falling completely flat, for I had nourished such very large hope, such strong confidence, thinking that it must be recognised as something very much out of the common, that readers would be altogether captivated, and that critics would deal with it as an important effort in the development of modern fiction.

I find a plain statement in a note-book of the year, under the date of March 28th, dealing with my condition.



"I have completely let myself go in idleness—giving up any immediate effort, and hoping for luck on my return from the cruise with Henry.

"Of course the disappointment in results of *Bevan Yorke* has helped to take all the stuffing out of me."

Again under the date of April 3rd, another note is similar in character :

"Henry and I are to start in three days from now on a five weeks' cruise in the Mediterranean, and I shall hope to come back from that with restored energy and courage. And to that end I must completely pull myself together while away, and have definite plans for life and work."

And still harping on it, there is a note of May 5th :

"At sea off the North African coast—the five weeks of our voyage over, except six days.

"It must be good to have looked at so much beauty, and visited so many interesting places—of knocking on the head so many inaccessible long-thought-of cities, such as Athens and Constantinople. But mentally I feel altogether empty and yet full of unrest. If I could judge by sensation I should never write another line—certainly not another line that is worth reading. . . .

". . . This writing of books that fail to attract largely is unquestionably fraught with pain. After a book has fallen flat one can understand the feeling of a mother who has taken her daughter (adorably pretty, as she thinks) to a ball, expecting all the room to admire and make much of her, and then finds the sweet thing neglected, not danced with, scarcely noticed. But it is far worse. It is like making love again and again, and always being repulsed. Worst of all, when the wooed object (the public) seems to give that most fatal answer of the



really nice girl : ' Yes, I *do* like you—but not in that way.' ”

I have never kept a diary, but in these note-books of mine, which were originally intended for notes of ideas, or plans of work, brief descriptions of scenery and of people, really like the jottings in an artist's sketch-book, I see that I tended more and more to use them for entries which might be thought more suitable to a personal journal. These are now my only written records.

It was a most enjoyable cruise. (My boy and I are always happy together, whether on land or water.) The ship was not too full, and there were some pleasant people on board. Very specially so were those at whose table we sat. My old club friend, Sir John Hall, and Lady (Sophy) Hall, his altogether charming wife, whom I had not had the pleasure of knowing till then. Amiable and universally liked Roddy Brownlow, the soldier brother of Lord Lurgan, and resembling him in appearance, made us up. Hall had also been a soldier. During the War, as a full colonel, he had command of the regiment of Irish Guides, and after that he held an important post in the War Office. Our table had room for seven places, and seeing that we only occupied five, the head steward suggested more than once that we should admit two other people to complete it. But Johnnie Hall refused this accommodation in the sternest terms, his kind blue eyes giving out quite unexpected flashes of wrath, and his tranquil brow darkening and frowning. Very soon then the notion of burdening us with intruders was abandoned.

Some years before this I had proposed Johnnie for Our Society—the thing commonly known as The Crimes Club—but I was not aware that I had brought into our small assembly such a real expert in crime. The books that he wrote about famous Murder Cases had a great success. I remember that he told to Henry and me the whole of the Bravo Case in so enthralling a manner that we remained sitting at our table long after the saloon



had been deserted by everybody else. And we stayed there till bedtime.

The ship halted for two or three days at some of our ports of call. Monaco was one of them. I was able to take Henry over to Cannes, and show him that haunt of my youth. This marked my third realisation of the changes that had occurred there after a period of years. I was staggered by them. A new harbour, a casino, huge hotels—only the old town, the curve of the Croisette, and the islands remaining to assure one that the place was actually Cannes.

“August 2nd. I am now wilfully letting the months run by—doing nothing, not even thinking. On August 5 we are to depart on a Continental holiday of six or seven weeks. After that I must set to—or I never shall.

“As soon as possible I absolutely must get away by myself, for the purpose of work and thought. I believe I had better go to Alassio or Hyères early in December.

“It will be my best chance, and with Henry established at Cambridge I shall not be so much wanted at home.

“Go by boat to Toulon or Genoa.”

We went straight through to the Engadine, and put up at Maloja. My family liked our hotel, the climate suited them, and they were amused by the gaiety of St. Moritz. We made some motor expeditions, and even found ourselves at times pulled by horses. The note-book says :

“Maloja. August 18th, 1927. It is how many years since I was last here, with my dear mother—twenty-seven years—thirty years? Something like that. How wonderful I should have thought it if I could have seen myself making this return visit with a loved wife and two grown-up children, and if, too, I could have seen or known all that lay between—the joy, and the great sadness, my books, my friends,



my experiences, the vast world changes, including the War."

"Maloja. August 24th. "To-day my dearest Henry and I walked down the Maloja Pass to the Italian frontier—sixteen miles. *Que la vie est étrange!* When here twenty-seven or thirty years ago I was quite lame (left foot, old injury at eleven years of age), and believing myself permanently crippled, unable to walk more than four miles on end without great pain and disablement. To-day I walked the sixteen miles without the slightest fatigue, and on returning to Maloja at tea-time was ready for another walk with my S. (This evening I hope to *dance!*)

"We left at 9 a.m. amid clouds, and walked down into clear skies and sunshine—down through the pine trees, with a rushing torrent as cheerful noisy companion all the way; through the prettily-named villages—Casaccia, Vicosoprano, Stampa, Promontogno. . . . Each village with its narrow cobblestoned street unchanged (just as thirty years ago anyhow), women washing clothes at a public fountain in the street . . . the post diligences stopping at the Post Office and making a little centre of life there.

"As the climate grew milder lower down there were flowers in the balconies of houses—oleander, carnations, geraniums. Here and there one saw pear trees well sheltered in small house gardens. Two poplars. Then near Promontogno Spanish chestnut trees. Fruit trees full of fruit. Gardens overflowing with bright flowers."

After the Engadine we went to the Italian Lakes, staying first at the Victoria Hotel and then at the old Belle Vue at Cadenabbia. It was a joy to me to lead my little group through the well-remembered loveliness of those scenes. I took them across the lake to the lateria that in the old time half the visitors at Cadenabbia



used to approach at tea-time in a procession of boats. The steamboat service ferried us conveniently to the top of the lake, while a motor car took us down to Villa d'Este at its bottom. Another long motor drive was across the hill to Lugano and the Swiss lake. My people praised everything, but naturally not with my enthusiasm. For me there hung over all the glamour of a vanished youth.

We went home after a glimpse of Lucerne. My wife liked Lucerne and its lake better than anything that she had seen.

By the late autumn I was completely enervated.

I held on till the Annual Dinner at the Authors. After that Lord Gorell had kindly agreed to take charge for a few months. It was my last year of office. Next June I should be altogether free of the Society. In December, my wife and family consenting, I ran away from England for the purpose of wrestling with myself and a new book.

"Saturday, Dec. 10th, 1927, 6.20 p.m. At sea, in the *Orsova*.

"A dark cold night. We have just passed Dover and Folkestone—Dover with its house lights and street lamps showing the contours of the land, a light on each of the two piers at the entrance of the harbour, and behind, as if over intervening hills, the South Foreland light flashing."

If you are a good sailor and going alone, the sea offers altogether the easiest way of getting to the Riviera. My goal was Hyères, and this meant a taxi to St. Pancras, a comfortable cabin for six days, another taxi from Toulon. I went by the Orient Line, and that very popular and influential Londoner, Robin Dickinson, had obtained for me a recommendation to the rulers of the Company. The Captain, Evan Cameron, therefore welcomed me at his table.



And what a wonderful, unbelievable but delightful Captain, this Captain Cameron was. For he added to the attractiveness of all good and experienced sailors the incomparable charm, from my point of view, of being a man with an intense love of literature and a really solid literary taste. In his stateroom on the upper deck, which he begged me to use freely, there were many books, all good ones, not a bad one among them. Verse, serious prose, fiction, including examples of the latest work in French and Italian. He was himself writing a book, or rather two books. In the one recently published he gives a stirring account of his adventures with a small steamer in the Black Sea when he was rescuing Russian refugees towards the end of the War. This volume has a laudatory foreword by the Poet Laureate. Captain Cameron made the acquaintance of Mr. Masfield at sea and they took to each other without hesitation as sailors should.

My spirits rose all through that voyage to Toulon. Scribbling every day in my cabin, I had finished a long short story before I left the ship. As soon as I had unpacked and settled down at the Golf Hotel, Hyères, I set to work in earnest. My spirits rose higher and higher. I was writing, I was writing. The ugly spell had been broken.

The title of the novel that I had at last tackled had been given me by my wife. It was *We Forget Because We Must*, and in this case of course the title *was* the book. I was very anxious therefore not to lose it, and I was almost superstitiously fearful of being forestalled. This was very unlikely, but in regard to titles of books quite extraordinary coincidences sometimes occur.

I had such an experience with the book that was called eventually *The Guarded Flame*. First I had wanted to call it *The Lighthouse*, but the publishers informed me that there were already two *Lighthouses*, and they asked me to give them without delay something else. I suggested one title after another, only to



find that it was not free. I went on trying and failing to hit anything suitable and also available until in despair I told the publishers that we would fall back on the name of the principal character and use that for the title—*Richard Baldock*.

Imagine, then, my astonishment and consternation when I saw advertised the imminent issue of Mr. Archibald Marshall's new novel, *Richard Baldock*. I really was scared by this. I dreaded to see Marshall's book lest by some devil's trick it should prove to be my book. It was not, and I had no further trouble beyond the changing of my hero to Richard Burgoyne. But as I said, the episode made me nervous.

Mrs. Edith Wharton has a most interesting old house and a quite lovely garden at the top of the hill that dominates the town of Hyères. She very kindly asked me to lunch with her, and while showing me round the garden asked me politely about my work, and I told of the anxiety in regard to *We Forget Because We Must*.

On this she gave me a most valuable piece of advice. She said that I ought at once to ask my publishers to send an announcement to *The Times Literary Supplement* giving the title as that of my forthcoming novel.

A week later the announcement duly appeared, and a few days after that came a statement from a novelist who was hard at work finishing a book that he had called *We Forget Because We Must*. He very handsomely said that he would stand aside in my favour. I could not thank him because he said he preferred to remain anonymous. I felt very grateful to Mrs. Wharton, because but for her I should have lost my cherished title.

Speaking of her own work she said that she was very methodical. She went to her desk every morning at the same hour and forced herself to sit there even if she felt unable to write. But in fact she was always able. After a time her practised pen began to move across the blank white paper.



Mrs. Wharton, quoting somebody, said of a certain author that his reputation was only international.

At the Golf Hotel the Golf Links lay, so to speak, at one's bedroom door. In other respects, too, the place suited me admirably. It was a gay happy hotel without being noisy. After a good day's work the evening was cheering. Every year the same pleasant people returned; so the reassembling in December seemed like that of a large friendly house party. I went back in the two following winters, and in the second of them I had my Barbara with me.



## BRIGHTON

TOWARDS the end of 1929 my family decided in a manner that seemed rather sudden that we could not live in London any longer.

Throughout the following year we wandered about, winding up the year at Bordighera. We none of us liked Bordighera, and although we had intended to finish the winter there, we left in January and put up at Brighton. We had by this time determined to settle at Brighton. To this end I bought one of those fine Regency houses in Brunswick Square. The next task was to do what builders speak of as bringing a house up to date. By this phrase they mean, naturally, putting in such comfortable contrivances as central heating, hot and cold water service, and at least three or four bathrooms. This process was very slow, and our modernised residence was not ready for occupation till July. By that date, I may add, I had spent upon the repairs considerably more than I had given for the freehold of the house. This may seem a trivial and sordid detail to include in the story, but it came to be of importance to us a little later on.

The family had allowed me to take about the best room in the house for my own use, and I had the greatest pleasure in arranging this. I see that I recorded satisfaction in my note-books.

“ July 13th, 1931. My workroom is finished. It is a workroom fit for a king, furnished with beautifully bound books, really good pictures (a Coreggio, a Ruysdale, Hogarth, Zophany), and all the other things my dear mother gave me. And if I do not work in it



steadily and assiduously, I must deserve shame and obloquy. As to the dreadful lapses from working—See Dr. Johnson's Journal. He speaks of the year passing by like a dream with nothing done."

"Sunday, August 27th, '33. Brighton. Beautifully fine weather and all well at home. But I am very feeble and muddled in my work. I have taken several days to write a tribute to, or appreciation of, Anthony Hope for *The Author*.

And oh for a man to arise in me  
That the man I am might cease to be.

Not all of him, but a great part. One could not relinquish the ego for any reward. If the new man did not *feel* like the old man one would be hideously uncomfortable."

It has been said of Brighton that if you stood still on the front for five years, in this time everybody that you have ever known or heard of would pass by. This of course is only another way of saying that sooner or later everybody comes to Brighton. During the short time that we were living in Brunswick Square there came to our house many interesting visitors, including Mr. E. V. Lucas, Mr. Walter de la Mare, Mr. J. B. Priestley, Lady Wilson (wife of "Scatters" Wilson), Sir Hanbury Williams, Major Maurice Baring, Mr. Alan Ainsworth, Sir Chartres Biron, Sir Gerald du Maurier, Sir George Hastings, as well as endless friends of my son and daughter.

Gerald du Maurier made himself altogether charming to my young people at luncheon, and told us delightfully amusing stories. He was of course a quite marvellous mimic, and his particular gift in this regard was to be able not only to reproduce voice, manner, even aspect of face, but to say things which were utterly absurd, and yet so completely characteristic of the person mimicked that one was almost persuaded that they really had been said. The occasion of this visit to us was the last time but one that I ever saw him. The other



time was only a little while later when Barbara and I went to an afternoon party that he and Lady du Maurier gave at their attractive house at Hampstead. I was fond of Gerald and deeply regretted his death. Neither the world nor his friends could spare him.

A note speaks of Sir George Hastings. "To-day George Hastings came to luncheon—very kind and pleasant. He says he is seventy-eight, but obviously life has lost no charm or interest. He said work is a necessity—to have plenty to do."

That was nearly six years ago, so he is now eighty-four, but still amazingly young both in appearance and manner. As I think I said, he had been a friend of our family for at least fifty years, and throughout that time unfailingly kind and hospitable. A few months ago I met him at a cocktail party given by my daughter Barbara. Faultlessly dressed, with a flower in his buttonhole and a smile on his lips, he was as smart and alert as anybody present.

I was happy in my workroom until the grievous state of public affairs did not any longer permit of private felicity. For during August the Crisis came, shaking Great Britain to its foundations, in an hour frustrating well-nourished hopes, and closing the horizon with the darkest of clouds for thousands and thousands of people.

It should be remembered that at the beginning of the year Lord Snowden had sounded notes of alarm. Otherwise, with one exception, I did not meet anybody who had seen it coming. The exception was my son's rich financial friend, Mr. Chester Beatty, who said that it was quite unavoidable. Henry and I walked up and down those lawns in front of the Squares at Hove, with a heavy load upon our spirits, and spoke of the possibilities of a complete breakdown of civilisation. Perhaps only because I did not want to do so, I could not believe that this could ever really happen. Henry, however,



took a more logical and therefore a more pessimistic view of the situation. Of course one could think of nothing else than the political trouble and its perils, its menaces.

The administration was about to fail in the hour of need. Neither of the two leaders was able to carry on or to form a new government. It was a deadlock. But then came that splendid stroke of King George, who hurried from Scotland and by the exertion of his personal influence brought about the National Government, with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Baldwin working together harmoniously. Thanks to our King we had been given a respite.

We listened then to members of the new cabinet saying that we might trust them not to mislead us. But we on our side must be prepared to make heavy sacrifices, to face hard times bravely, to sustain our courage during the next few years.

Above all else the task of the National Government was to "save the pound", and by keeping on the gold standard to avoid the cruel misfortunes that would befall the poor man. Experts of the financial world explained scientifically why and how the loss of the gold standard would inevitably raise the cost of life, restrict the labour market, and by the necessity of increase in the height of wages for the few able to earn wages, bring our foreign trade almost to a standstill. It was wise therefore to spend as we were spending unlimited millions in bolstering the exchange. Then the gold standard went. As somebody said, we did not abandon it. We just slid off it. Members of the Cabinet assured us that they had done well and wisely, not to attempt any longer to keep on it; while financiers and bankers explained to us scientifically why and how the happiest results might be anticipated from the final disappearance of the great bugbear. Cost of life would necessarily be prevented from rising, work would become more easily obtainable, the pound sterling would be as valuable to the poor man as it had ever been. There were at this time about three million unemployed. The income tax



was at five shillings. A Supplemental Budget had inflicted severe cuts in the pay of soldiers, sailors, teachers, civil servants generally.

At the end of September, with many other timid souls, I heard with alarm that we were to have a general election. It seemed to be running a great risk. For there had been no time as yet for the Government to achieve any marked improvement in our circumstances, and who could say what the country thought of them?

From my note-book :

"Brunswick Sq., Oct. 15, 1931. To-morrow nominations for polling on 27th. The National Government with Ramsay MacDonald as premier appeals for a mandate to cure the country's troubles, without disclosing any particular policy. The Tories, suspected of trying for power, support him, and a few Liberals also.

"The disconcerting thing is that authoritative people speak of the great dangers ahead, as though the nation were really at its last gasp—bankrupt, discredited, and seething with discontent that may produce revolution. The words 'revolution' and 'civil war' are freely used."

Another entry :

"*The Times* leader of to-day says the General Election is unique in the circumstances which had led to it and the consequences depending upon its result . . . ! Then after rebuking flippancies and gibes, etc. of the speakers. . . . 'To-day, when the future of nation, of Empire, and perhaps of civilization itself is at stake, they are patently and grossly indecent.'

"These are heavy words."

"Sunday, Oct. 18, '31. Polling is to take place on Tuesday, October 27, and people on the whole seem confident that the National Government will be returned, and they hope with a working majority. A really big majority would undoubtedly have valuable effect abroad.

"There have been good broadcast speeches from MacDonald, Baldwin, Simon, Snowden. Snowden



IN THE BOY-GROUPS OF THE U.S.A.









full of grave warning, and describing the Labour programme as 'Bolshevism run mad.'

"They all say difficult times ahead at the best."

"Sunday, Oct. 25. Polling on Tuesday next. Last night Mr. Ramsay MacDonald spoke on the wireless (a tired man) for the last time before the election. He again described the situation in August last, the necessity for the National Government (because the existing Labour Government refused to act courageously), the need for the general election, and the consequences of returning to power a Labour instead of a National Government. He appealed to all to vote for the men who were trying to save the country and not for the men who would ruin it."

"Oct. 29, '31. My S's birthday. . . . The Election was a triumphant success for the National Party—the Socialist Party swept right away—only fifty (about) of them left in the House—Majority for the Government over five hundred. We all breathe again."

"At Carlton Club, on night of election, Mr. Baldwin told me it was infinitely more than he had dared expect. I remember that, speaking with a fine enthusiasm, he said: 'Do you know what we owe it to?—the splendid working man of England. He never fails when tested!'"

Readers may wonder why I should recapitulate so carefully the events of the crisis, since they occurred such a few years ago. I do so because I feel it is of the utmost importance that people should keep them in mind. And, with the hour of peril past, it is so very easy to forget. We were then tottering above the precipice, and our path still lies ahead of us close to the precipice's edge. It would be futile, then, to comfort ourselves with the belief that we have already turned our back on the descent, and are moving nearer and nearer to the old safe ground. It must surely be well that, without being pessimistic, we should face stern facts. Then at least we shall avoid the shock of those periodical awakenings when a Government that has



for a considerable time been begging us to sleep comfortably in our beds, suddenly shouts at us that we must open our eyes, and see that half the house has already fallen into the abyss.

After about two years at Brighton my family decided, rather suddenly, as it appeared to me, that we could not live there any longer.



## AUTHORS AND AUTHORSHIP

**O**N leaving Brighton we went to London and scattered. For a long time I had nourished the theory that a family that is closely united, as ours was, full of mutual affection, should occasionally break up, in order that each member of it may learn to banish anxieties and fears with regard to the other members, and be able to have quiet thought, which is never obtained while living under the family roof. Now was an opportunity to put my theory into practice.

In London my wife went to one hotel, my children to another, while I myself retired into the dignified solitude of rooms.

I may add at once that we all grew thoroughly tired of the arrangement. Coming together again many months before I had planned, we have remained united. In the autumn of that year, we took the lease of a flat in Westminster, within sound of the Cathedral Angelus. Those few bells three times a day I find soothing rather than unpleasant.

During the months in which I was alone I thought much of writing, and of those who follow the calling, sometimes considering both in the light of experience gained when I was with the Authors' Society, and of the cases that I still meet at the Royal Literary Fund.

Could one advise that a friend's son or daughter should be an author—I mean, a professional author—an author who must follow literature not merely as a calling, but as a trade? It almost seems that conscientiously one would have to say: "No, make the young person



something else—something more solid and life-sustaining—something which is held in far more general respect and esteem. As, for instance, a railway porter or a 'bus conductor." If time and occasion permitted that one should amplify one's advice, going into the question more deeply, I feel myself that I should be obliged to put forward the manifold difficulties and obstacles that now lie on the pathway of authors. Not the least of these would be the queer fluctuations of the trade nowadays, which are so great and sudden as to render one's daily bread, if it depends on a decently remunerative pen, more than precarious.

Once people used to say: "Nothing succeeds like success." Now that aphorism should be: "Nothing succeeds but success." An author now has to make a fresh success with each of his books; for the public he gained once may have vanished completely when he looks for it next time. Years ago this never happened. Readers had their favourite authors, and were faithful to them. They knew what they liked, and what they didn't like. Thus in my extreme youth the issue of a new book by a leading author was an important event, something waited for anxiously, and to be discussed with deep interest afterwards—for instance, a new volume of Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, essays by Froude, philosophical musings by Lecky, some new utterance of Gladstone, Herbert Spencer, Manning, Newman, Darwin, Emerson, Morley, Huxley. It was the same thing with the novelists—George Eliot, Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins, Black, Meredith, Hardy, du Maurier, Thackeray, Dickens, and Anthony Trollope had retired from business before I began to take notice. But other names that sound again in my memory are Rhoda Broughton, Ouida, Blackmore, Mrs. Henry Wood, Shorthouse.

We of the craft all know that the conditions of authorship have changed enormously, but perhaps we do not recognise that they are still doing so. The system of patron and author was not altogether a bad one. It relieved the author of his immediate anxieties, and gave him an untroubled mind for the task in hand, by



providing him, at any rate temporarily, with sufficient funds for maintenance. For the book issued under patronage a high price was asked, and naturally the sales were comparatively small. This continued to be the case with the subscription book, the author issuing his prospectus and collecting money from subscribers as against future publications. High prices and small sales were still the rule during the long reign of the three-volume novel. This was published at a guinea and a half, and although it was bought almost entirely by the circulating libraries, and not by members of the public, it brought the author a fairly substantial remuneration. But in recent times, beginning with the six shillings net book, there has been an era of very much extended sales. Unfortunately, however, these big circulations would appear to yield less and less to authors, especially with the cheap edition of half a crown, two shillings, and at sixpence. The royalty payable is necessarily very small.

A still further development is the twopenny library, which has sprung up all over the kingdom, not only in big towns, but at the seaside, and even in villages. Very sharp competition has cut badly at the grand old libraries, and in consequence these have been compelled to reduce the number of what is now called the Library edition at seven shillings and sixpence.

Thus altogether the future for authorship as a trade is not too promising.

Yet the number of writers steadily increases. I have sometimes imagined myself in company with many other writers at an evening party. Indeed looking about the crowded room I see that we are all writers. I know then that it is a special occasion. We authors have been asked to meet the reader—the only reader left. We crowd round him, flattering him and asking questions. What first made him take up reading? Did the knack of it come easy to him? What are his best hours for reading? To which questions he replies benignly that he has no set times—he reads when he can—usually a little at night just before he falls asleep.



Of course we are not yet within reach of a realisation of that dismal phantasy. But a rather hateful thing about present-day readers is that they not only sheepishly follow success, they fix their attention on the financial results, and speak of them in an unworthy manner. They say: "Have you heard? So-and-so is making quite a fortune with his new book, *The Mountain of Love*. He will be a rich man before it stops selling." Such considerations are of course entirely irrelevant in any estimate of literary worth.

The sordid vulgar view is so contemptible that I have often ventured to speak against it strongly. In fact I got into trouble and was accused of unpatriotic feeling because I said in America on a public occasion that in England the *only measure of merit is success*, and the *only measure of success is money*. . . . That is a hard saying. But I still think it is substantially true.

It seems pretty obvious that in spite of all the advertisements the art of writing cannot be taught. The only trustworthy teacher is oneself—that hard taskmaster who is never satisfied. Of course if one satisfied *him*, it would be all up with one. Thus the worth-while author remains at school to the end of his days. In this respect the utmost solace he can anticipate is the faint afterglow that was felt by Dr. Johnson on re-reading his Dictionary in later years. "Sir," said the Doctor, "I found fully as much better as worse than I expected."

Turning to the artistic side of the matter, I find that adolescent boys and girls who tell me enthusiastically that they want to be writers have not a notion of the disappointment that we professionals experience in the writing itself. Of course we should improve with practice, the task should become easier instead of, as too often happens, more difficult. Balzac was very strong on this point. He said a writer should become so certain of his means of expression that, as he writes, his mind can be quite free to think about what he desires to say. Very few however attain this freedom. For the rest of



us, in a greater or less degree, go on "agonizing", as Samuel Butler aptly called it.

All that old Flaubert suffered in the composition of *Madame Bovary* is proverbial, and in recent times there have been recorded instances of similar distress. Sir William Rothenstein in his delightful Autobiography gives a striking one. He says . . . "I could sympathise with Conrad's difficulties. For Conrad was himself out in his struggle for *le mot juste*, for words that should glow with a white heat; Conrad would often despair, and one needed all one's energy to pump faith and hope into him. . . . He said of himself: 'I can't get anything out of myself quickly, it takes me a year of agony to make something like a book—generally longer. And, my dear fellow, when it is done there are not more than twenty people who understand *pourquoi on se tue pour écrire quelques phrases pas trop mauvaises*.' "

In the composition of a book, beyond the pains of phraseology there should of course be included construction, the planning of logical development, the search for natural dialogue, the constant care not to depart from accuracy and truthfulness of character drawing. And even when one is assured as to the essential value of the fable one may feel (as Arnold Bennett said) that one is frittering away a good thing. Another difficulty in writing a book is to sustain one's confidence and keep in the same mood throughout. To write a full-length novel takes three months at shortest, a year or two years, at longest, and all that time one must think in the same manner. One must go on telling oneself that the book will be all right in the end. And again and again one's confidence may fail.

These doubts are fatal. They must somehow be banished before one can get along properly. The whole thing is of course make-belief. To write a novel is like playing a long game with thousands of unseen children. R. L. Stevenson put this plainly.

"*Is it worth doing?*—When it shall have occurred to any author to ask himself that question, it is implicitly answered in the negative. It does not occur to the child



as he plays at being a pirate on the drawing-room sofa, nor to the hunter as he pursues his quarry ; and the candour of the one and the ardour of the other should be united in the bosom of the author."

In dwelling so heavily on our difficulties I may seem to have forgotten what I said much earlier in this volume of the comfort, the peace of mind, that can be derived in one's withdrawal at will from the real world to the world of one's imagination. But it is not so. I am not losing sight of the compensations that are ours as well as the setbacks and disappointments. On balance, I would say unhesitatingly, a writer's working life should be and generally is a happy life.

Sometimes the happiness of the confident creator can be detected by his readers. This occurs, I think, more often in short stories than in books of full length. It may perhaps be because here the necessity of a sustained mood is of so much briefer duration. The fable in all the freshness and force with which it came to the writer can be transmitted through immediately. It should have then perceptible to sympathetic recipients, a clear sense of the confidence, the enthusiasm, the ardour of the blood that produced it.

This glow of satisfaction can undoubtedly be traced in some of Bret Harte's stories. It is also in some of Arthur Morrison's tales of Essex. It is of course never in Hardy, perhaps once or twice in Maupassant, faintly in Grazia Deledda and Ada Negri, and strongly but too affectedly in Alphonse Daudet. Needless to say it is not discoverable in Tolstoy or any other Russian. There could be no mistaking its presence in Rudyard Kipling's stories.

Years ago Mrs. W. K. Clifford told me that she was expecting Kipling to dinner, and there had been some notion that he was to come to her also for an hour in the afternoon. At this time he was living near her in the Bayswater district. During the afternoon he telephoned to say that he was hard at work on a story and could not therefore come to her. Then he rang up to say



that he might be a little late for dinner, and he begged that she and her guests would sit down without him. He would come as soon as he could. But he had not finished his story and he dared not leave it.

He did not come at dinner or afterwards. But quite late, when her guests had all gone and a servant was putting out the lights, he appeared, eager, excited, still warm with the glow of work done at white heat, and asked Mrs. Clifford if he might read his completed story to her. She readily consented. So he seated himself and at once began. He read enthusiastically, happy in the assured conviction that, far from having "frittered away a good thing", he had done it full justice.

Another and more recent example of an author's personal satisfaction comes to my mind. Mr. Somerset Maugham told us at the Garrick Club that he had found his length in the very long short story, and he intended to use this henceforth. It gave him elbow room—it suited him. I remember the cheerful and contented tone of his voice while speaking of his intention. He was happily sure of himself.

How fully warranted in their confidence were these two authors will be seen when I add that Mr. Kipling's story was *The Man Who Was*, probably the best story he ever wrote, and that soon after that conversation with Mr. Maugham there came from his pen *Rain* and *The Letter*, stories so strong that each provided the materials of a fine stage play.

I am sure that one would be wise in obeying Mrs. Wharton's rule of going to the desk at a regular hour, and of sitting there either writing or waiting for inspiration to make one write. Unhappily I have never been able to follow any method myself, but being deeply interested, not only in the art of authorship, but also in its mechanical side, I have taken every opportunity of finding out what is the practice of others. Persistent as a press interviewer I will not leave them alone until they have told me all that I craved to know. Without



exception, I think, they submit to the Wharton régime. In my own case, when I try my very hardest, I break down after two or three mornings. Too often, moreover, when I have reached the desk I encounter failure and incapacity. I may have gone there eagerly, having in mind a lot of stuff that I want to pin down to paper, and yet, the impetus fading, I sit delaying and wasting time to a horrible extent. The long hand of the clock goes round, and almost half-way round again, and I am still doing nothing—that is, nothing of any value or belonging to my work. Perhaps I have written a few long unnecessary letters to friends, and worked on *The Times* Crossword puzzle. Finally, on one of these really bad mornings I give it up, and with a sigh and shrug of the shoulders I go out for a walk.

The only writer who ever told me of being afflicted in the same manner was Michael Sadleir. But his trouble never attained the magnitude of mine. He wasted time before getting to work. He described himself as “a very bad starter.”

Arnold Bennett was proverbially the most methodical of all writers. A fixed hour every morning saw him pen in hand, beginning to cover the white paper with that beautiful writing of his. He continued until it was time to have lunch. Then he withdrew from the desk, not to return to it until exactly the same hour next day. He had finished work. He was free, easy of mind, ready to enjoy the world with the zest and satisfaction that lasted to the end of his life. Only the direst urgency could force him to take up his pen again when it had thus been laid aside for the day, and nothing on earth, he assured me, could prevail upon him to write a line after his “evening meal.”

Arnold as well as obeying the law of conduct in regard to authorship practised a shrewd business-like management of its results. He needed no agent to keep his price up; nor could he possibly require the Society of Authors to protect him from the rapacity and sharp practice of publishers. Rather it was the publisher who might have been glad of help to prevent his being “done



down " by Arnold. Several times I praised him for this splendid way of doing business. He usually accepted my compliments with apparent pleasure, but on one occasion he answered so enigmatically that I began to doubt whether the stories of his acumen were not greatly exaggerated. Mr. Wells, whose colossal industry and productiveness of course place him high above all rules, had come to this opinion. My note-book reminds me :

" July 29. Last night at a dinner given by Messrs. Heinemann I had a pleasant talk with H. G. Wells, about work, etc. He said he suffered dreadfully from interruptions, and the dire effect they had upon his working power. But he could not anyhow avoid them.

" I asked if he planned his stories fully, and he said no, his characters ran away with him often. But he liked to write the last chapter early—then he knew what he was aiming at and where he was going.

" He said no two writers, of course, had the same method.

" Arnold Bennett, he said, was not really good at business, but bad. All that was a pose with him. He knew A. B. very well and liked him greatly.

" He said that it is the affected author, queerly dressed, with a loose tie and a big hat and a cloak, full of talk about art, who really proves the man to make good bargains and manage his business affairs well."

Another note reports how I had a talk one Sunday afternoon at the Garrick Club with Hugh Walpole and J. C. Snaith.

" Hugh said he was very methodical. He breakfasted at 8 a.m. Wrote letters from 9 to 10 ; and from 10 to 1 p.m. he worked at his articles, novel, or whatever he was doing. After 1 p.m. he thought no more of work ; he ceased to be a writer. He never worked more than this, except when he went into the country to finish something. Then he worked



from 5 to 7 p.m. Never later. He had never worked after 7 p.m.

"Snaith was strongly of opinion that the three hours from 10 to 1 p.m. were an ample day's work. Four hours exhausts."

Pinero was regular in his working habits. Galsworthy, I feel sure was, but I never had this on his own authority. Stephen McKenna I am sure is, and I seem to remember that he told me so. The same applies to A. E. W. Mason and Ian Hay. Pett Ridge brought the regularity of his long commercial training to the new world in which he had only himself for a master.

W. J. Locke used to go to his desk regularly, but most amazingly, not until nine o'clock or even later in the evening. I could never understand this. His days were long, fully occupied, with much society in them, and all the time he was spending energy. It would seem impossible that at the end of them he should be sufficiently fresh and alert to write in the sprightly fashion that had endeared him to so many thousands of readers. He told me, however, that the late hours suited him. He would never willingly abandon them. But he said that eight hundred words then or at any other time is enough to do, and he did not try for more.

Sir Joshua Reynolds said: "Genius is nothing but the intense direction of a mind to some intellectual object—the consecration of all our powers to it, which leads to disregard all toils and obstacles in the attainment of it, and if strong enough, will ultimately bring success."

This is of course miles from the truth, for genius is certainly a gift of the gods and not an acquisition. But it is a good maxim for ordinary workers.

In opposition to a prevailing opinion I would say that authors, authors of any worth, are not conceited. But all imaginative writers have one particular form of egotism, an egotism of such vast proportions that one may better call it self-assertiveness. In each book they assert themselves. Each is a long persistent unhesitating



self-assertion. Except for such a craving perhaps no books would ever be written.

Tridon says of artists generally :

“ It is precisely this egotism, this vanity, which compels them to endure hardships in order to reproduce their dreams on paper or canvas, in prose, verse, musical notation, clay, or marble.

“ The artist insists that the world must know of his dreams ; his egotism is not satisfied with the creation of a phantasy. This phantasy must be revealed to other human beings. His dreams fail to satisfy him until they have become, so to speak, the mould for the world’s dreams, until his dreaming dominates the world’s dreaming.”

This is no doubt true, but it is only half a truth. Behind the dream there is the message. I believe that every strong author thinks he has a message ; and his real task is the delivery of this message. He thinks he has derived a lesson from life and he wants to communicate it, he has found a key to open locked doors, he has seen a glimpse of the only safe road to human progress. Henceforth it is his message. It need not be stated explicitly. Indeed it rarely is. But it is insinuated into everything he writes. It breathes through every page. It is the spirit and stimulation of his entire work. Then nothing else counts with him if the world does not recognise what he is trying to say. Money, praise, the acceptance of his art, the universal surrender to what Tridon calls his dream, the happy share taken by many thousands of grown-up children in what Stevenson called his game of make-belief—all these things added together cannot console him. He has failed to deliver the message. Whenever he thinks of the failure he is miserable. His state of mind is given by G. D. Rossetti so beautifully that I cannot refrain from quoting it :

“ Fame failed me ; faith failed me ; and now this also—the hope that I cherished in this my generation of men—shall pass from me, and leave my feet and



my hands groping. Yet, because of this are my feet become slow, and my hands thin. I am as one who, through the whole night, holding his way diligently, hath smitten the steel into the flint, to lead some whom he knew darkling ; who hath kept his eyes always on the sparks that himself made lest they should fail ; and who, towards dawn, turning to bid them that he had guided God speed, sees the wet grass untrodden except of his own feet."

If I venture to attribute to myself this sort of message, that is delivered sometimes almost unconsciously, I would say that it is Kindness. " Be kind to people. Have sympathy, tolerance, understanding." It seems to me the underlying message of all my work, and I hope I am not under a delusion when I think that of late years its import and my intention have been clearly recognised.

But beyond this, with regard to the general bent, most of my books have been what in my youth were called " novels with a purpose ". When I had not the stimulation of a settled purpose or a definite thesis to support I did not feel altogether at ease while writing a book.

To cite a few of my novels : *Vivien* had the plain purpose of arousing sympathy for shop girls and their bad treatment under the living-in system in small meanly controlled establishments ; *The Guarded Flame* was to exemplify the power of human thought and its triumph over material surroundings ; *A Remedy Against Sin* was as strong a plea as I could make for the reform of our cruel marriage laws ; *Spinster of this Parish* had exactly the same aim ; *In Cotton Wool* is really a tract to show the perils of shirking hard duties and living sheltered and completely selfish lives ; *The Day's Journey* and *We Forget Because We Must* are—

But enough.



## MEDITATIONS

WHEN describing my note-books I said how they were all that I possess as written records of the past. From time to time, when tidying, I had developed a kind of passion for destroying, and I was not content until I had made all clear. A few letters from which I have quoted were really kept by accident rather than by intention. Perhaps only because of this habit of sweeping everything away, I have had secretly a slight contempt for the men who maintained a sort of museum of their past history—their portraits at different ages on the walls—the books they have written specially bound, and in the most conspicuous place in the bookcase—huge albums with contents devoted to themselves—a heterogeneous collection of snapshots, press cuttings, ball programmes, even menus of public dinners (with themselves in the list of speakers), the week's appointments with various hunts—testimonials framed and glazed, or flat in books on the writing-table. Nor should I omit photographs of groups—the dear old school, the regiment, the house party.

As I looked at these things under a friend's guidance I have thought of some old actress showing one her treasures, and explaining sadly that the letters, which I need not read, are all from her devoted admirers who included men of the highest rank. No one, she says, would believe the tale of her personal triumphs now perhaps. She sighs. *Et pourtant j'ai été belle.*

There may be, however, much that can be said in favour of the preservative habit as against the annihilating one, since it makes for continuity of self and provides assurance that the owner of the collection has



been the same person all the time. My way might indeed be bad, if it were possible, to lose altogether or in parts the unbroken sequence of the self story for want of such evidence to link it all together. But certainly I do not find that I have lost my past, or a normal full-blooded egoism, merely because I have not carried a progressive record of it. At any moment I can recover everything. I have but to close my eyes to see vividly long vanished scenes, to hear the sound of voices, and to feel again every emotion that I ever experienced as accompaniment of passing events. The sudden glimpses, as of yesterday, come to me unbidden and without chronological order.

For instance—it is a steeplechase I rode in France. It is a run with hounds in the New Forest at the end of a long blank day in late November. At this period of the year, with the leaves all down and beginning to rot on the ground, the badness of scent in the Forest was proverbial. The day I am living again had been altogether scentless. All the field had gone home except myself. I rode with Povey, the old huntsman, on his way back to kennels, while he let the hounds perfunctorily draw the open woods as we went through them ; with Fred, the first whip, and Richards, the second whip, completing our small party. Suddenly then, perhaps only because a touch of frost was coming into the deep stagnant air, we had found and were away on a burning hot scent. The hounds screamed till the pace they were going checked the music. We drove our fox straight before us for six or seven miles, and then killed him in the open. Our horses with heaving sides and quivering nostrils sent up clouds of steam. We ourselves were smelling with diffuse perspiration, and stronger than all was the odour of dog. We rode back to Lyndhurst along the dusky roads—we few, we happy few, we band of brothers. . . .

Far more quickly than transitions were made in dissolving views of old magic lanterns, I see myself dining at the Inner Temple on Grand Night as a guest of Sir Lancelot Sanderson among judges and advocates.



Then in a sudden obliterating flash, the noble old hall, the shrewd faces of the lawyers, the long tables below us and the quiet decorous students, the whole picturesque scene vanishes, and I am sitting with Barbara and Henry at the Café de Paris, a favourite haunt of ours, waiting for two friends of his, Prince Chula and Chiverton Peel, to join us at supper, and watching the performance of a conjurer, to whom we have lent things.

Another flash and General Gough is talking to me on the duck-boards in front of dug-outs on the Ypres Canal, beneath a dull cruel sky, with a spatter of rain like futile tears coming now and again. This also is in November. Sir Hubert says they are breaking off the Passchendaele Offensive. They could do no more.

"Oh, good news, sir. What good news!" . . .

It is countless years before that, and I am a child with other children, on the sands at Broadstairs. A man about thirty-five—a clergyman with a beard—comes along and talks to us in rather a strange manner. He has seen some bigger boys interfering with little boys at their digging, and he says that this was very wrong. People should work together in goodwill and amity. Moreover by combination they could do so much more than otherwise, and he instances the poor little forts we are building; and asks how would we like to build a real big fort. We could easily do it under his direction. He goes the whole length of the sands talking in this odd way. Then he says we had better assemble the same afternoon at half-past two at a point on top of the cliff. We should tell our mammas or guardians that we would be back to tea, but possibly rather late. A lot of us had followed him along the sands. His voice was pleasant to hear, his laughter too.

That afternoon at the appointed time and place we assembled—a multitude as they seemed to be now—but I suppose really fifty or sixty boys of all ages, each with a spade in hand. The strange man led us off, and we followed him joyously. If he had led us straight into the sea, we would have followed him. The thing was like the Pied Piper of Hamelin and his little mob.



On the sands he selected his site, told us to pile our coats neatly in rows, and then to come for his orders. With a [spade borrowed from somebody he marked out a circumvallation having a diameter of at least thirty feet, and put us into position to dig. There rose then a fort more tremendous than the mind of boy could have conceived unaided. It was a mighty erection in which we were to take our places and hold it against the incoming tide. The waves would be powerless to dislodge us from such a stronghold. Now I cannot remember the end. Certainly I was not in it when the tide came. But I know that for a week afterwards it remained there gradually decreasing after the waters at last had passed over it. Meanwhile then and there the stranger departed from us, but not to disappear for ever from the eyes of men. For he became Prebendary Carlile, and only a little while after this episode founded the Church Army.

Disconnected glimpses such as these come, as I say, of their own accord. But I can if I please put them in their proper places or summon a consecutive series.

Lying awake at night but no longer restless, because at my age sleep has ceased to be a necessity, I while away the time contentedly enough in doing this. Not having thought of them for ages I summon my schoolfellows.

I am at school again, and I remain there, thinking of Clinton and Hawkins, the masters, and of the boys: Mansfield; Westerveldt, a Dutch boy; Garland, a semi-Spanish boy; Ferguson, one of those heart-breakingly clever and industrious boys that occur in every school; Westfield, a good-looking and fiery American.

During the War I amused Reggie Barnes and Sainty Clowes at mess by telling them, what was quite true, that none of my fellow schoolboys seemed to flourish in after life. I never saw them or heard of them again until, usually on Saturday night, one of them, a man of forty or so, would come swaggering in upon me, saying: "Bill, don't you remember me? Of course you do. Well, I'm stranded. Lend me five pounds."



A few days after this narration of mine General Guggisberg, commanding one of Reggie's Brigades, came to dine with us. What was my surprise before dinner when the General, primed by Sainty, walked across the room and said: "Bill, don't you remember me? Lend me five pounds!" Guggisberg, although I did not recognise him, had been at school with me. We made merry together, and I praised him to the skies as being the first of my schoolfellows who had ever achieved honour and affluence.

Now if again I refuse to accept random visions and instead choose for myself, I make all the other Generals that I met out there as well as Guggisberg meekly parade before me. Here they come, the Higher Command, obedient to my call—Haig, handsome, silent, enigmatic, as he listens to Staff opinions as to our proper treatment of the German withdrawal in 1917 and expresses no opinion of his own; Kitchener, looking larger than life as he comes into a summer field to inspect us; Lord Rawlinson, Lord Cavan, Lord Horne; Lord Allenby, bidding good-bye to his immense army before going to take over the campaign against the Turks; Sir Henry Wilson, thin and loose-limbed, emphatic of speech and quite unceremonious in manner; Sir Walter Braithwaite, unfailingly cheerful and friendly. Generals Snow, Ivor Maxse, Gerald Boyd, and many more of their august rank. Then when I summon members of our own battalion, officers and men, out of the darkness of a curtained room they come crowding on me—Sharpy, Pratt, Shutes, Groube, Rickard, Boileau, and all the others, seeming to be pushed aside by my own dear old section, those two wonderful servants of mine, Cartwright and Mable, whose lives I preserved by obstinately refusing to sign death warrants for them in the form of recommended commissions, although each was qualified to hold one; Sergeants Newman and Gibbs, Stuart, a shoeing smith; Ashford and his cooker, knocked over in the Somme but not fatally injured, and now a prosperous man of business; Newton and



Russell, Lance-Corporal Neale, Holford, Dale, Wood, all drivers—and our indefatigable Regimental Quartermaster-Sergeant Clements. Stout fellows all. They were so kind to me, so faithful to me. My heart warms as I think of them. Happily I see the honest faces of many of them in the flesh at our Annual Dinners of Old Comrades. That comradeship is a bond unlike any other in its fullness and warmth. It is as if mysteriously you had to lie down in the mud side by side with a man before you could be so fond of him as that.

Yet only with a little less strength do we feel the bond that holds us to those outside our unit and strangers to us. It is sufficient for a man to have served in the combative forces of the War to become instantaneously our friend. When I meet one anywhere, in an omnibus, at a shop, at a cinema theatre, I can immediately talk to him on equal terms as if to a tried friend. All barriers between us have fallen. We are at ease together.

A stranger from whom, as I have already said, I received the most amazing kindness, was General Sir Reginald Barnes. My gratitude to dear Reggie will never fade. But indeed no memory that concerns the War can fade. I suppose it is natural that no other period should have left quite so deep an impression as those four or five years of one's life. The War ended nearly nineteen years ago, and yet at night, in thought or in dreams, it is yesterday and to-day.

And because of this indelibly heavy print, and to one's great discomfort, there come invincibly after all pleasant or tolerable recollections a clear representing of the monstrous cruelty, the horror, the measureless wickedness, that one has tried not to revive. But they are here, the hideous sights, the cries of anguish, the staggering flight of blinded and wounded men; the red tearing death refusing to kill outright, leaving the dead too long alive—the things that turned one sick with fear and pity.

Can it really be that there are people who will allow this agony to be brought upon the world again? It would be an even worse war, we are told, bringing



almost certainly in its train the collapse of civilisation and a return to barbarism. And nevertheless it is spoken of sometimes almost with acquiescence as more than a possibility, an increasing probability.

I believe that the young men of to-day would save us if they could. But they cannot control the old men. They dread them. I, too, dread the stupid old men. I dread the middle-aged men who are merely politicians and statesmen. I dread all men who had not personal experience of the last war.

I do not share the sentimental regrets of people for a vanished or vanishing London. It seems to me that London has been very little changed outwardly in the last fifty years, and its losses are more than balanced by the improvements that have come to it. A few old houses, such as Devonshire House and Grosvenor House, have been pulled down, but really they possessed little architectural or æsthetic value. London, the capital of a poor country, necessarily lagged far behind the wealthy cities of Europe in the character and importance of its buildings. Its few really interesting monuments, such as the Tower, St. James's Palace, and Westminster Abbey, remain to us quite untouched.

Historical London has of course been rebuilt several times, and it is now, for the greater part of it, terribly in need of another rebuilding. I should delight in knowing that not only the worst of the slums of East and South London, but all the horrible little streets that make up the enormous poor neighbourhoods of North, East, and South, were to be utterly abolished, and replaced with things new and better.

In the changes of London, such as they are, there has been a great and successful effort to raise the condition of the people. Among comparatively recent improvements in our life to-day are better sanitation, better lighting of rooms, better roads, more wholesome food in greater variety, better medical science, and the wide benefits of hospital treatment.



When the sentimentalists say they would like to have lived in bygone times, choosing, perhaps, the specially delightful elegance and picturesqueness of Queen Anne's period, can they really continue to do so after reflecting for a moment that in this charming time they might have died of appendicitis without anybody in the least knowing what was the matter with them ; that lovely ladies and fine gentlemen, talking so wittily at evening parties, and dressing so magnificently, were personally dirty ; that the sanitation of the graceful old house does not bear thinking of, and that its long-established nauseating odour would knock a modern visitor down as he crossed the threshold. Going home after the highly coloured feast of wisdom and the flow of wit at the modish assembly you would pass through ill-paved streets, which at any time of the night would be inhabited by outcasts, and be escorted all the way by famine and despair.

I am not yet an extremely old man, but, nevertheless, looking backward to my youth I see how amazing have been the developments. If I take as a starting-point the end of my twelfth year, it was a world without electric light or electric bells. Of course without the telephone and gramophone, without wireless or the cinema, or broadcasting, or aerial flight. It was a world that would have to do without motor cars for another twenty-seven years. There was no hot and cold water in bedrooms. In a good hotel only one bathroom was provided on each floor. On railways there were no sleeping cars or restaurant cars ; third class carriages were still little better than cattle trucks. A big ocean liner was three thousand to six thousand tons instead of seventy or ninety thousand tons, and Channel boats were distressfully uncomfortable cockle shells. It took all day to get from London to Paris instead of two hours or less.

At the same time there has been an unceasing spiritual progress, and in the last twenty-five years this has been very great indeed. For instance, in the bad



old days servants, shop assistants, hairdressers, dress-makers, and all that class of people were totally different from what they are to-day. Their pleasures are no longer gross and sensual, but nearly always with some intellectual appeal in them. They read, they go to theatres, they have ideas and enjoy discussing them. In the bad old days butlers and coachmen, and even women servants too, used so often to get drunk that one could never feel sure that they would be fit for duty on any particular date. Maidservants were frequently immoral; they "got into trouble" as the term was, and spread trouble all round them. Ladies' maids and valets were dishonest, and the employer was subjected to frequent annoyance from their pilferings. Nowadays we, the employers, may dismiss the apprehension that any of these things will happen. In public the behaviour of the class is perfect. A Bank Holiday crowd, only such a little while ago an almost dangerous concourse of male and female hooligans, thrusting, shoving, jostling, is now quiet, orderly, studiously polite and considerate to the old or feeble, making way for them, aiding them in every possible way. The girls of these new people dress prettily and well, the young men neatly and becomingly—far above their station, "like you and me", the old-fashioned and snobbish say. Why should not they look nice? They *are* nice. The modern young footmen coming up area steps for their evening out might be officers of the Guards Brigade. The aspect of the Guards privates issuing from the gates of Wellington Barracks, now that they are allowed to wear civilian garments when off duty, is a revelation of agreeable faces and refined expression where the stiffness and sameness of uniform may well have prevented their existence being suspected. Lastly and most infallible sign, the voices! All the old coarseness, vulgarity, and unpleasing tones have gone from their voices. The parlourmaid's voice sounds quite as musically on the ear as that of the young lady of the house, and the butler expresses himself as well as the master, although more modestly.



If I seem to go over these details with unnecessary precision, it is because I feel that we who were once traditionally described as their betters, have been too slow to recognise the height of the level to which the new people have reached.

As I said, we who had all the advantages have at least done much on the material side for the less fortunate. We have given them shorter hours of labour, old age pensions, the dole. But of course there are more things to be done. Things that we may not even notice. For it is an amazing truth that very few of even strong thinkers are able to think before their time. When little children were being worked to death in factories many good and kindly intentioned people seemed to think it proper, or at any rate were undistressed by the cruel fact. Before that they acquiesced in the flogging of women and public executions. Then there were the game laws, and the unspeakable wickedness of transportation for life. Again the horrible state of prisons. And the utter failure to take care of wounded soldiers. It needed such crusaders as Elizabeth Fry, Lord Shaftesbury, and Florence Nightingale, to awaken the public conscience by protest and action.

But at the moment there are at least two evil things that should be obvious to all. One is the horrible deep mining for coal that is still regularly practised. Imagine it! We are sending men sixteen hundred feet or more below the surface, down into darkness, excessive heat, poisonous atmosphere, and making them work there under intolerable conditions for long hours, with a possibility at any moment of an explosion which will bring a fall of rock or débris to crush them to death, or to bury them alive. This cannot be right, for any possible gain to the rest of the community. It is a crime against humanity.

Another dreadful thing that stares us in our faces is the bad housing and overcrowding. We do of course think of this. We know that efforts are being made to improve matters, and we hope that ultimately everyone may be comfortable. Meanwhile we seem quite content



that millions of young men and women from the very beginning of life should have their physique ruined and their moral nature degraded. I suppose even the most powerful would say that they do not interfere because they could not make an intervention so strong and so universal as to be effective.

Be that as it may, there cannot be any doubt that the historian of later ages will hold it as almost incredible that at this stage of the world's history civilised people should have permitted such enormities to continue and yet sleep comfortably in their beds.

During the last few years, since my close connection with the Society of Authors ceased, I have quite lost touch with all the new young writers. This is much to my regret, because I should so much have liked to hear from them what they themselves were thinking about much of our modern fiction. It strikes me often as aimless and chaotic. I am sure that they would have been willing to discuss all such matters with an old stager. In existing circumstances my ignorance as to prominent members of the latest school is lamentably profound. I know, of course, that all my life I have indulged a certain laziness of mind that made me shrink from conscientiously keeping up with contemporary literature. In this respect I have resembled the great Lord Brougham who, when asked if he had yet read a prodigiously successful new book about which all the world was talking, said: "No. I am hoping that it will blow over." Thus, when carrying up to bed with me a couple of volumes from the circulating library, I have frequently yielded to the temptation of going to the shelves and fetching down one of the old favourites—*Peppys's Diary*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, or a novel by Thackeray, Dickens, or Scott. I cannot, however, do this any longer, for I have reached "saturation" point. I have read these books so often that I know them now too well.

I think there can be no question that our modern literary criticism is very good. Although I must digress



a moment to say here how very much I dislike the new custom by which novelists review novelists in the public press. In no other profession or walk of life could such a patently disloyal practice be tolerated. For if such critics are compelled conscientiously to express severe blame, they are absolutely interfering with the livelihood of a member of their own calling. Imagine a doctor publicly advising people not to call in another doctor, or a barrister saying that another barrister has made a hideous mess of his last case. But I find great satisfaction in reading what I will call professional criticism—as, notably, that of Mr. Desmond McCarthy, who is delightfully bold and resolute ; of Sir John Squire, with his pleasant enthusiasms ; the late Mr. Gerald Gould, Mr. Ralph Straus, Mr. Richard Temple, Miss Ethel Mannin, Mr. James Agate—for their responsibility and adequateness as guides to readers.

The work of the novelists themselves I have read haphazard, and no doubt have missed a great many valuable contributions of the passing hour. But to cite a few, I must say that I derived great pleasure from *Spanish Chestnuts* by Miss Sackville-West, Miss Delafield's very amusing *Chip and the Block*, and *Saturday Night at the Greyhound* by John Hampson. The plan of this book resembles one by Miss Nora Hoult. That, too, I much admired. And still another of hers, *Time, Gentleman*, I thought was quite excellent. Then, of course, there are outstanding works—books that refuse to blow over, such as Miss Margaret Kennedy's *Constant Nymph*, and that altogether perfect gem *Bassett* by Miss Stella Gibbons. In a sense I am sorry for these two ladies, because, for the rest of their lives they cannot but be embarrassed by the terrible rivalry of the authors of *The Constant Nymph* and *Bassett*. *The Return of the Soldier* I always remember. But Miss Rebecca West is really too long and firmly established to be mentioned in this brief list. Miss Sarah Salt I place high for the power and sadness of *Joy*, the story of a stage-struck girl. I admired this book immensely, and I wish that all girls at the age of its heroine might be made to read it,



because so many of them are in danger of following in Joy's unhappy footsteps. A book by Mr. Hugh Kingsmill—*The Life of Frank Harris*—delighted me, and seemed in my judgment a very fine piece of work.

For reasons added to their literary merit I value very highly *Cry Havoc*, a strong, courageous book by Mr. Beverley Nichols, and the recent book concerned with the War by Mr. Van Druten, and also Mr. A. A. Milne's book on the same subject. There is, I think, a similarly-intentioned book by Mr. Alec Waugh.

It is always rash to generalise without very full knowledge, but I would venture to say that in my opinion at the present time the young women are writing better than the young men. If this is indeed so, Arnold Bennett would have said that it is everything. He was remorseless in his demand for good writing. After I had been praising somebody's work, I hear him saying—with the initial hesitation that was not quite an impediment or a stammer—"I-t's no use, William, she can't write."

When I speak in praise of books against war written by Mr. Van Druten and Mr. Beverley Nichols, I should perhaps explain that I am not thus withdrawing my condemnation of those other war books written by young men in which a false picture is given of the state of mind of those fighting and a very cruel denial of their uplift and noble purpose. I know that the work I now extol has been scathingly criticised. It is said to be unhealthy, decadent, as if it were the preaching of those intolerable people, the conscientious objectors. If this be so, then I and all the friends whose opinion I value are conscientious objectors. Let the finger of scorn be pointed at us too. No doubt also I may incur censure for running counter to the prevailing notions of superior people if I say stoutly that I think the series of illustrated books issued by the *Daily Express* exhibiting the horrors of the last war have done much good in confirming the attitude of mind of youth. Young men to whom I have talked in shops and offices have explicitly told me so.



May I make clear also that when just now I spoke contemptuously of old men and accused them of being stupid, I was thinking only of one very large class? I am not myself so stupid as to attribute stupidity to old men of big achievement and proved sagacity. I respect, I venerate some of our splendid old men, and I would trust their wisdom to the end of their lives. I consider it has been fortunate for us as a nation that during these difficult and perilous years our affairs should have been in the hands of three men who, I suppose, would call themselves old, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Neville Chamberlain.

No, I was thinking of the innumerable elders who have passed through life in the ease and comfort given by ample means. They came into large revenues which still yield sufficient for comparative affluence, or they inherited prosperous and old-established commercial businesses. They have never made anything or earned anything. But they often have subordinates at the mercy of their good pleasure, family dependents, sometimes many employees. They belong to political associations, they sit on platforms of Parliamentary candidates. I fear the dead weight of their influence.

Hear them talking at their clubs. Everything in the past was right, everything now is wrong. It is the fighting spirit that raised Britain to the heights. If she becomes pacifist she falls. They speak with nostalgic regret of their public school. That rough old school régime was grand. They are pleased to think of how they were flogged. It did them good. It hardened them. It made them what they are.

Heaven and earth! Made them what they are! And hardened them! See one of them waddling across the soft carpet of the club room to drink a glass of port with another similar old boy at eleven o'clock in the morning. Listen to them as they tell each other that the young men of to-day have lost the good old sporting instincts, and are devoid of hearty honest interest in games. Then they denounce them for shirking duties. They say that they are morbid, hysterical, introspec-



tive ; that they are unmanly in appearance, with affected poses, and effeminate voices. Finally they will have the almost blasphemous impudence to say that they are lacking in personal courage.

The evidence of the courage shown by young men nowadays is overwhelming. Think of their lone flights across vast oceans, their motor racing, their exploration in untrodden and notoriously dangerous savage lands, their climbing and conquest of hitherto forbiddingly inaccessible mountain peaks. They are so utterly reckless of their own lives that they scarcely seem to value them at all. They summon Death to walk at their sides. When Death creeps away from them, and they stand for a little while beyond his reach, they summon Death back to them to be their companion again. They will fight for us—every one of them—in our armies, navies, and air forces, if the necessity for fighting comes. Shame on us all if we do not use our utmost energies to prevent the necessity ever coming. To this end the rearmament, in spite of the terrible burden of its cost, is no doubt wise and proper. It is the insurance that we pay for the folly of mankind. A strong Britain should be more powerful in preserving peace than a weak Britain.

I wonder if it has been noticed how very often I have spoken of people's kindness. This is primarily because every time I look back I see it wherever I turn my eyes. People being kind to me, not only during the War, but in all the years before from childhood onwards. And again ever since the War. Not thinking of myself, I see others receiving endless kindness. People acting unselfishly. People helping others instead of themselves. Strong people being gentle with the weak. The weak somehow gathering sufficient strength to aid and protect the strong when these are temporarily weakened.

Comparatively soon, then, I came to consider kindness as the paramount virtue. It can work miracles and move mountains. Of all the powers that men and women possess, this of being kind is the greatest. And deep in



ourselves we seem to know that in being kind we follow a natural instinct. We seem to know that destiny means us to be kind. We have reached a point of development at which some sort of operative altruism is a necessity for our peace and well-being. We *must* be kind, because if we are knowingly unkind we become afterwards miserable. In my own experience the kind people are the happy people.

But with many other experiences too, all matches and leads to the same conclusion. In youth and in age I have been given the same lesson from life. It all seems to fit together convincingly. It never fails to be indicated and affirmed. It is what I have tried to make the communication of advice that without stating it explicitly I put firmly into my books. If I had to say it with absolute plainness I could but repeat it in increased strength, and say thus :

Kindness. Be kind to people. And then, when you have been as kind as you possibly can, be a little kinder still.

LONDON, *July*, 1936—

BRIGHTON, *May*, 1937.



# INDEX

## A

Acton, Lord, 169  
 Adams, Frank, 303  
 Adcock, St. John, 155  
 Addison, Colonel, 72  
 Agate, James, 346  
 Aidé, Hamilton, 99, 100  
 Ailesbury, Lady, 109  
 Ainley, Henry, 209  
 Ainsworth, Alan, 317  
 Alexander, Sir George, 90  
 Allenby, Lord, 339  
 Allhusen, Mrs. Henry, 112, 208  
 Andrews, Police-Constable, 257  
 Annesley, Lady, 90  
 Archer, William, 146, 155  
 Ardagh, Colonel, 241  
 Ardilaun, Lord and Lady, 105  
 Arthur, Sir George and Lady, 259  
 Asquith, Right Honourable H. H.  
     *See* Oxford and Asquith, Earl of  
 Asquith, Mrs. *See* Oxford and  
     Asquith, Countess of  
 Astor, Mrs. John, 212  
 Athlone, Earl of, 78  
 Avery, Sir Horace, 262

## B

Baker, George Barr, 303  
 Baldwin, Stanley (Earl), 289, 321,  
     348  
 Balfour, Arthur James (Earl), 93,  
     212  
 Bancroft, Lady, 78, 113  
 Bancroft, Sir Squire, 78, 90, 259  
 Bankhead, Miss Tallulah, 106  
 Baring, Major the Honourable  
     Maurice, 317  
 Barnes, General Sir Reginald, 245,  
     250, 260, 340  
 Barrett, Wilson, 79

Barton, Right Honourable Sir  
     Dunbar Plunket, 262  
 Beach, Rex, 303  
 Beaconsfield, Earl of, 83, 110  
 Beaman, Joe, 16  
 Beatty, Mr. Chester, 318  
 Beaufort, Duke of, 136  
 Beaulieu, Lord Montagu of, 135  
 Becker, Bernard, 146  
 Beddington, Mrs. Claude, 194  
 Beith, Major, 289, 290, 332  
 Belcher, George, 257  
 Belloc, Hilaire, 192  
 Bennett, Arnold, 106, 261, 290, 300,  
     347  
 Bennett, H. Gordon, 168  
 Bennett, Sir Henry Curtis, 262  
 Benson, E. F., 209  
 Beresford, J. D., 261  
 Besant, Sir Walter, 286  
 Birkenhead, Earl of, 289  
 Birley, Oswald, 218  
 Biron, Sir Chartres, 142, 177, 202,  
     317  
 Blake, Sir Henry, 201  
 Blasco Ibañez, Vicente, 108  
 Bleaskey, Horace, 261  
 Boileau, Major Raymond, 221  
 Bordeaux, Henri, 292  
 Bowater, Sir Vansittart, 219, 221  
 Boyd, Edward, 262  
 Braddon, M. E., 21, 23, 24, 58, 78,  
     84, 86, 138, 144, 149, 182, 225,  
     268  
 Braddon, Right Honourable Sir  
     Edward, 191  
 Bradlaugh, Charles, 55  
 Braham, Charles, 90  
 Braithwaite, General Sir Walter,  
     339  
 Brendon, Mr. George, 165  
 Brisbane, Arthur, 302  
 Brough, Lionel, 31, 108  
 Broughton and Vaux, Lord, 168  
 Broughton, Miss Rhoda, 78, 163  
 Browning, Robert, 113  
 Buckmaster, Lord, 257, 262



Bull, Right Honourable Sir William, 291  
 Burgess, Gillett, 303  
 Burgin, G. B., 183  
 Burnand, Sir Francis, 31, 63  
 Burns, Right Honourable John, 192  
 Burns-Hartopp, Colonel, 136  
 Burrows, Sir Cordy, 33  
 Burton, Sir Richard, 182  
 Butler, Dr., Master of Trinity, 130  
 Butt, Madame Clara, 54

## C

Caithness, Lady, 45  
 Cambridge, Duchess of, 77  
 Cameron, Captain, 313  
 Campbell, Harriet, 12  
 Campbell, Mrs. Patrick, 106  
 Capper, Alfred, 78  
 Carey, Miss Joyce, 258  
 Carlile, Prebendary, 338  
 Carmichael, Miss, 179  
 Carr, Comyns, 99  
 Carson, Lord, 177  
 Cavan, Lord, 339  
 Cave, Viscount, 291  
 Cecil, Arthur, 99  
 Chamberlain, Right Honourable Joseph, 93, 179  
 Chamberlain, Right Honourable Neville, 248  
 Chambers, Mr., 39  
 Chambers, Robert, 302  
 Champion de Crespigny, Sir Claude, 136  
 Chandos-Pole, Lady Anna, 116  
 Chaplin, Charlie, 75  
 Chaplin, Henry (Viscount), 95  
 Charnwood, Lord and Lady, 259  
 Chart, Harry Nye, 36, 39, 65, 71  
 Chart, Mrs. Nye, 32, 66, 71  
 Charteris, Honourable Evan, 212  
 Charteris, Richard, 135  
 Cherryman, Mr., 33  
 Chesser, Dr. Elizabeth Sloane, 261  
 Chesterton, G. K., 192  
 Choate, Hon. Joseph H., 179  
 Cholmondeley, Miss Mary, 183  
 Christian, Princess, 107  
 Churchill, Lord, 258  
 Churchill, Lord Randolph, 93  
 Churchill, Right Honourable Winston S., 209, 289  
 Clark, Holman, 209, 262  
 Clarke, Sir Edward, 63  
 Clarke, Sir Stanley, 176

Clifford, Mrs. W. K., 328  
 Cobbold, Major Ralph, 222  
 Coleridge, Lord, 32  
 Collier, Colonel, 101  
 Collins, Captain, 32  
 Collins, Wilkie, 22, 284  
 Colquhoun, the Chevalier, 168  
 Compton, Miss Fay, 250  
 Connaught, Duke of, 107  
 Conrad, Joseph, 287, 327  
 Cooper, Sydney, 59  
 Cornwallis-West, Mrs., 89  
 Costa, Miss, 48  
 Costa, Mr., 47  
 Cravath, Mr., 302  
 Crawford and Balcarres, Earl, 257  
 Crawford, Oswald, 100  
 Crofton, Lord, 185  
 Crowe, Mrs. (of Brighton), 32  
 Curzon of Kedleston, Marquess, 209  
 Cust, Harry, 212

## D

d'Abernon, Lord, 212  
 Dane, Miss Clemence, 261  
 D'Arcy, Mrs. Frank, 189  
 Dawson, Mr., Lord Mayor of Dublin, 102  
 Dawson, Sir Douglas and Lady, 206  
 de Castellan, Mademoiselle, 78  
 de Chantel, Sister Marie, 161  
 de Croisset, Francis, 222, 261, 293  
 de Flers, Robert, 222, 299  
 de Grey, Lord, 104  
 Delafield, Miss E. M., 346  
 Delane, John, 270  
 Delane, William, 270  
 de Lara, Isadore, 79  
 de Leuville, Marquis, 45  
 Delpierre, M. Octave, 41, 77  
 de Nemours, Duc, 77  
 Denison, Lady Ida, 137  
 Denison, Lady Sybil, 137  
 de Paris, Comte, 77  
 de Pomar, Duc, 45  
 Desborough, Lady, 212  
 de Ville, Baron, 45, 120  
 de Vismes, Prince, 45  
 Devonshire, 8th Duke of, 168  
 Dighton, Richard, 94  
 Dixon, Thomas, 303  
 Dobson, Mr. W. C. T., 50  
 Doneraile, Lord, 262  
 Doubleday, Mr. Nelson, 302  
 Douglas, James, 155



Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, 26, 155,  
189, 260  
Drinkwater, John, 260  
Drummond, Mr., Editor of *The  
World*, 147  
Druten, Van, 347  
Dudley, Georgina, Countess of, 90,  
112, 184, 205, 295  
Duhamel, Georges, 293  
Duncan, Edward, 50  
Dunmore, Lord, 257  
Dupont, Mr. (of Brighton), 72

## E

Earle, Mrs., 85  
Edge-Partington, Rev. Canon, 238  
Edward VII, 117, 135, 173  
Edwardes, Mrs. George, 112  
Edwards, Sutherland, 79  
Elliot, Willie, 209  
Escott, T. H. S., 22  
Esmond, Mrs., 67

## F

Fanshawe, General Sir E. A., 246  
Farren, Miss Nellie, 65, 71  
Farrère, Claude, 293  
Farruharson, Right Honourable  
Dr., 186  
Fife, Duke of, 31  
Fitzgerald, Percy, 79, 162  
Finberg, Mr. A. J., 122  
Forbes, Norman, 262  
Forbes-Robertson, Sir Johnston,  
262  
Forster, Lord, 135  
Fortescue, Miss, 31  
Frampton, Lady, 54  
France, Anatole, 266  
Franklin, Mrs. (of Broadstairs), 28  
Frith, W. P., 50, 79, 82, 184  
Furniss, Harry, 63

## G

Galsworthy, John, 261, 286, 332  
Gardiner, Doctor, 223

Garmoyle, Viscount, 31  
Garvice, Charles, 183  
George V, 319  
Gibbons, Miss Stella, 346  
Gill, Sir Charles, 67, 262  
Giraldy, Paul, 291  
Gladstone, W. E., 93, 138  
Gleichen, (General Lord Edward,  
233, 260)  
Glyn, Mrs. Eleanor, 146  
Goddard, Arthur, 78  
Goldsmid, Sir Julian, 168  
Gorell, Lord, 261, 289, 291  
Gosse, Edmund, 260  
Gough, (General Sir Hubert, 248,  
251, 252, 260, 337  
Goulburn, Major, 222  
Gould, Gerald, 155, 346  
Grace, W. G., 91  
Graham, R. D. Cunninghame, 192  
Graham, Miss Winifred, 183  
Grain, Corney, 99  
Grant, Baron, 158  
Gray, Maxwell, 183  
Gray, Ronald, 122  
Grey of Fallodon, Viscount, 289  
Griffin, Gerald, 161  
Grossmith, George, the elder, 79  
Grundy, Sydney, 189  
Guest, Sir Merthyr, 136  
Guggisberg, General, 339  
Guggisberg, Lady, 67  
Guinness, Mrs. Benjamin, 106  
Guthrie, Anstey, 260

## H

Hackwood, Mr., 16  
Haig, Earl, 234, 242, 244, 339  
Hall, Julian, 261  
Halsbury, Earl of, 178  
Hall, Sir John, 309  
Hall, Major Byng, 23  
Hall, Sir Edward Marshall, 67,  
262  
Hamilton, Dr. Lawrence, 20  
Hamilton, Cosmo, 146  
Hannen, Nicholas, 258  
Harcourt, Sir Vernon, 139  
Hardy, Dudley, 54  
Hare, Sir John, 262  
Harrison, Clifford, 99  
Harrison, Frederic, 183  
Harte, Bret, 82  
Hastings, Sir George, 79, 144, 316  
Hatton, Mr. Joseph, 19



Hauser, M. (of Lucerne), 37  
 Hawker, Colonel, later General,  
   Claud, 219  
 Hawkins, Sir Henry (Baron), 32  
 Hawtrey, Sir Charles, 275  
 Hay, Ian. *See under* Beith  
 Haydon, Miss Florence (Mrs.  
   Waugh), 275  
 Hays, Will, 303  
 Heneage, Claud, 196, 262  
 Henn-Collins, Lord Justice, 177  
 Heseltine, Godfrey, 135  
 Hewart, Lord, 262  
 Hicks, Sir Seymour, 67, 262  
 Higgins, Henry Vincent, 263  
 Hirsch, Gustave, 45  
 Hoey, Mrs. Cashel, 22  
 Holland, Clive, 155, 261  
 Hollingshead, John, 65, 90  
 Holstein, Duke of, 111  
 Horne, Lord, 339  
 Hornung, E. W., 155, 183  
 Hout, Miss Nora, 346  
 Howth, Earl of, 136  
 Hueffer, Ford Maddox, 99, 155  
 Hume-Williams, Right Honourable  
   Sir Ellis, 79, 177  
 Hunloke, Sir Philip, 135  
 Hunt, Miss Violet, 99  
 Hutchinson, A. S. M., 258, 261  
 Hutchinson, Sir George, 183  
 Hyndman, H. M., 192  
 Hyne, Cutcliffe, 123

## I

Infield, Mr., 66  
 Irving, H. B., 265  
 Irving, Sir Henry, 62, 64, 90, 166

## J

James, Henry, 101  
 James, William, 101  
 Jefferson, Cordy, 79  
 Jennings, Miss Gertrude, 261  
 Jerome, Jerome K., 183  
 Johnson, London representative of  
   *Figaro*, 78  
 Johnstone, Doctor James, 155  
 Jopling, Mrs., 99

## K

Kane, Captain, 46  
 Kaye-Smith, Miss Sheila, 260  
 Kean, Fred, 16  
 Kendall, Dame Madge, 78, 90,  
   259  
 Kennedy, Miss Margaret, 346  
 Keppel, Major George, 221,  
   234  
 Kilmorney, Lord, 183  
 King, Richard, 155  
 Kingsmill, Hugh, 347  
 Kipling, Rudyard, 108, 288  
 Kitchener, Earl, 234, 339  
 Knight, Joseph, 79

## L

Labouchere, Right Honourable  
   Henry, 31, 56, 64, 137, 150  
 Laffan, Miss May, 43  
 Langtry, Mrs., 89, 190  
 Lankester, Forbes, 177  
 Lanoire, Maurice, 261  
 Lascelles, Hon. Gerald, 132  
 Latimer, John, 16  
 Laurie, Sir Percy, 257  
 Lecky, William E. H., 105  
 Leconfield, Lord, 136  
 Lehmann, Mr. R. D., 63  
 Leighton, Lord, 59  
 Lennox, Lord Edward Gordon,  
   34  
 Leslie, Fred, 71  
 Lewis, Sir George, 32, 179  
 Li Chi'ing Fong, 186  
 Linton, Major, 239  
 Linton, Mrs. Lynn, 22  
 Locke, W. J., 260, 332  
 Lockwood, Sir Frank, 32, 63  
 Londesborough, Earl of, 104,  
   136  
 Londonderry, Lady, 90  
 Lonsdale, Earl of, 136  
 Lotta, Mademoiselle 114  
 Lovell, Francis, 133  
 Lowe, Sir Hudson, 117  
 Lownes, Charles, 67  
 Lucas, E. V., 67, 136, 317  
 Lutyens, Sir Edwin, 107  
 Lytton, Bulwer Lytton, first Lord,  
   83  
 Lytton, second Lord, 83  
 Lytton, Edith, Countess, 84



# INDEX

777

## M

McCarthy, Desmond, 346  
 McCarthy, Justin, 79  
 MacDonald, Right Honourable J. Ramsay, 289, 321, 348  
 McDonnell (Australian cricketer), 91  
 McGuire, Mr. and Mrs. Rochfort, 212  
 Machen, Arthur, 123  
 McKinnell, Norman, 262  
 MacLagan, Dr., Archbishop of York, 192  
 Maclean, Major, 222  
 Macmillan, Sir Frederick, 257  
 Mahaffy, Professor, 186  
 McKenna, Stephen, 260, 289, 332  
 Major, Miss Lilian, 95  
 Mannin, Miss Ethel, 348  
 Mare, Walter de la, 317  
 Marie Louise, Princess, 107, 259  
 Marlborough, Duchess of, 212  
 Marshall, Archibald, 201  
 Mary, Queen, 107  
 Mason, A. E. W., 209, 332  
 Mathews, Sir Charles, 32  
 Maude, Aylmer, 289  
 Maugham, Somerset, 258, 290, 290, 329  
 Maurier, Sir Gerald du, 262, 317  
 Maurois, André, 293  
 Maxwell, Edward, 17  
 Maxwell, Fanny, 21, 65  
 Maxwell, Gerald, 23, 31, 65, 97, 262  
 Maxwell, Jack, 163  
 Maxwell, John, 119, 148, 157  
 Maxwell, Mary Elizabeth. *See* Braddon, M. E.  
 Maxwell, Polly, 41, 43, 48  
 Maxwell, Rosie, 14  
 Meath, Earl of, 259  
 Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Anastasia, Grand Duchess of, 168  
 Mensdorf, Count Albert, 206  
 Merenberg, Countess, 171  
 Merenberg, Countess Adda, 171  
 Michael, Grand Duke, 171  
 Middleton, George, 303  
 Middleton, Lord, 215  
 Midleton, Lady, 112  
 Mildmay, Lord and Lady, 212  
 Millais, Sir John, 31, 59, 60  
 Miller, Mrs. Alice Dewar, 303  
 Milne, A. A., 260, 289, 347  
 Molloy, Fitzgerald, 79  
 Monckton, Lady, 184  
 Montrose, Duchess of, 168  
 Moore, George, 100, 105, 106, 284

Moore, Miss Sydney Braken 143  
 Morand, Paul, 243  
 Morrison, Arthur, 183  
 Mortimer, Mr. James, 44  
 Moulton, Sir Fletcher (Lord Moulton), 130  
 Murray, Sir David, 59  
 Mussolini, Signor, 294

## N

Napoleon, Prince Louis (Napoleon III), 117  
 Needham, Colonel The Honourable Henry, 183  
 Nesbit, Miss Catherine, 106  
 Neubauer, Professor Adolf, 42  
 Nevill, Lady Dorothy, 110  
 Nevill, Ralph, 110  
 Newcastle, Duke of, 187  
 Nichols, Beverley, 347  
 Nicol, Sir W. Robertson, 153  
 Norman, Miss, 257  
 Norreys, Lady, 206  
 Noyes, Alfred, 261  
 Nutting, Lady, 194  
 Nye, Mr. Jack, 66

## O

O'Connor, T. P., 31  
 O'Donnell, Mrs., 16  
 Orsi, Count, 44  
 Ouida, 85  
 Overton, Grant, 303  
 Oxford and Asquith, Earl of, 204, 289  
 Oxford and Asquith, Countess of, 205

## P

Page, Hon. Walter H., 224  
 Paine, Henry Gallup, 302  
 Palmstierna, Madame, 159  
 Parker, Sir Gilbert, 107  
 Parkinson, William, 58, 122  
 Parnell, Charles Stewart, 103  
 Partridge, Sir Bernard, 122  
 Pater, Walter, 96  
 Pearce, Stanley, 135



Peck, Mr. and Mrs. Harland, 73  
 Peel, Lord, 209, 257  
 Pegram, Mr. Fred, 122  
 Pemberton, Sir Max, 155  
 Penton, Sir Edward, 135  
 Perceval, Captain, 168  
 Phillips, Mr., 67  
 Philp, Miss Elizabeth, 79  
 Philpotts, Eden, 287  
 Pilar, Monsieur, 167  
 Pinerio, Sir Arthur, 260, 299,  
 332  
 Playfair, Sir Nigel, 262  
 Pollock, Channing, 303  
 Poole, Sir Reginald, 179  
 Popham, Francis, 233  
 Portugal, Queen Amélie of, 77  
 Powell, Henry, 135  
 Powell, Colonel Martin, 135  
 Price, Sir Robert, 130  
 Priestley, J. B., 317  
 Proctor, Canon, 58  
 Pryce, Richard, 183

## R

Raffalovich, André, 98  
 Ramsay, Edith (Mrs. Green),  
 200  
 Rawlinson, Lord, 339  
 Reade, Charles, 23  
 Reading, Marquess of, 177  
 Redesdale, Lord, 242  
 Rendel, Lord, 168  
 Revelstoke, Lord, 212, 256  
 Ribblesdale, Lord, 136, 204, 205,  
 259, 297  
 Richards, Grant, 152  
 Ridge, Pett, 332  
 Rimmell, M. Eugène, 42  
 Ritchie, Lady, 284  
 Rivoire, André, 299  
 Roberts, Fred Russell, 222, 233,  
 260  
 Roberts, Lord, 194  
 Romain, Jules, 293  
 Roosevelt, Mrs. Theodore, 303  
 Rothenstein, Sir William, 327  
 Rousby, Mrs., 89  
 Rousby, Robert, 79  
 Royden, Miss Maude, 261  
 Russell, Sir Charles (Lord Russell  
 of Killowen), 32, 63  
 Russell, G. W. E., 186  
 Russell, Lady, 209, 261  
 Rutter, Owen, 290

## S

Sackville-West, Miss, 346  
 Sadler, Michael, 260, 330  
 Sala, George Augustus, 22, 80, 162  
 Salisbury, Marquess of, 93  
 Salt, Miss Sarah, 346  
 Sambourne, Linley, 63  
 Samuel, Sir A. M., 257  
 Sanderson, Right Honourable Sir  
 Lancelot, 336  
 Sassoon, Sir Edward, 30  
 Schloesser, Mr., 47  
 Schuster, Mrs. Leo, 94  
 Scotter, Sir Charles, 187  
 Sears, Mr. Joseph, 302  
 Selous, Edmund, 182  
 Seton, Sir Bruce and Lady, 94  
 Sharp, Maurice, 222  
 Shaw, George Bernard, 146  
 Simpson, Palgrave, 79  
 Sitwell, Sir George, 137  
 Skirrow, Mrs. Charles, 113  
 Sladen, Douglas, 183  
 Snaith, J. C., 331  
 Snow, General Sir Thomas, 339  
 Snowden, Viscount, 321  
 Sothorn, Edward A., 22  
 Spain, Queen Victoria of, 107  
 Squire, Sir John, 346  
 St. Albans, Duchess of, 112, 207  
 Stanley, Sir H. M., 102  
 Stanley, Miss Maude, 185  
 Stannard, Mr. Arthur, 83  
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 284  
 St. Helier, Lady, 111, 138, 259  
 Stoker, George, 98  
 Stopes, Dr. Marie, 289  
 Strachie, Lady, 80  
 Straus, Ralph, 346  
 Sutherland, Duchess of, 90  
 Sutro, Alfred, 107  
 Symonds, Miss, 289

## T

Tauchnitz, Baron, 44  
 Taylor, J. H., 223  
 Taylor, Sir Richard, 179, 262  
 Teck, Duchess of, 77  
 Teck, Duke of, 77  
 Tempest, Miss Marie, 67  
 Temple, Richard, 346  
 Tennant, Miss Dorothy, 101  
 Thackeray, William Makepeace,  
 284



Thring, Mr. G. Herbert, 286  
 Thursby, Sir George, 135  
 Tinaire, Madame Marcelle, 293  
 Toole, J. L., 63, 65  
 Torby, Countess, 171  
 Townsend, Mr., 122  
 Travers, Miss Rosalynd, 191  
 Treacher, Mr. (of Brighton), 66  
 Tree, Sir Herbert Beerbohm, 263  
 Tree, Miss Viola, 263  
 Trench, Herbert, 183  
 Trevor, F. G. B., 51  
 Trevor, Harry, 51  
 Trevor, Leo, 50, 123, 262  
 Trevor, Colonel Philip, 51  
 Troubetzkey, Princess, 212  
 Trübner, Madame, 184  
 Trübner, Nicholas, 45  
 Tweedale, Julia, Marchioness of, 112  
 Tweedie, Mrs. Alec, 261

V

Vachell, Horace Annesley, 260  
 Vanbrugh, Miss Irene, 67, 209, 259  
 Vanbrugh, Miss Violet, 67  
 Verdier, Monsieur, 72  
 Victoria, Princess Helena, 107, 259  
 Victoria, Queen, 138

W

Wakefield, Hugh, 258  
 Waldegrave, Lady, 80  
 Walker, Mr. Frederick, 168  
 Walkley, A. B., 265  
 Walpole, Sir Hugh, 261, 289, 331  
 Warburton, Egerton, 220  
 Ward, The Honourable Cyril, 206  
 Ward, Miss Genevieve, 78  
 Ward-Jackson, Major, 135  
 Warwick, Countess of, 90  
 Waters, Dallas, 260

Watt, Mr. A. S., 153, 155  
 Weigall, Lieutenant-Colonel Archibald, 51  
 Weigall, Fitzroy, 51  
 Weigall, Gerry, 51  
 Weigall, Miss Rachel, 51  
 Weigall, William, 51, 262  
 Wellington, Duke of, 47  
 Wells, H. G., 265, 331  
 Wemyss, Lady, 212  
 Wenlock, Lord, 136  
 West, Miss Rebecca, 346  
 Wharton, Mrs. Edith, 294, 314, 392  
 Wheeler, Mrs., 89  
 White, Brig.-General Hon. Robert, 206, 209, 216, 242, 260, 296  
 Wild, Sir Ernest, 262  
 Wilde, Lady, 95  
 Wilde, Oscar, 68, 85, 91, 94, 103, 122, 141  
 Williams, Sir Hanbury, 317  
 Williams, Jesse Lynch, 303  
 Williams, Montagu, 32  
 Williams, Oakley, 155  
 Wilson, The Honourable Lady, 298  
 Wilson, Sir Henry, 339  
 Wingrove, Ernest, 133  
 Wodehouse, P. G., 258  
 Wood, Mrs. John, 22, 103  
 Worcester, Marquess of, 136  
 Wright, Miss Ada, 35  
 Wright, Lord, 258  
 Wyndham, Sir Charles, 79, 91  
 Wyndham, Mr. and Mrs. Robert, 79

Y

Yates, Edmund, 31, 64, 69, 79, 133, 137, 146, 147, 162

Z

Zuker, Adolph, 302







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